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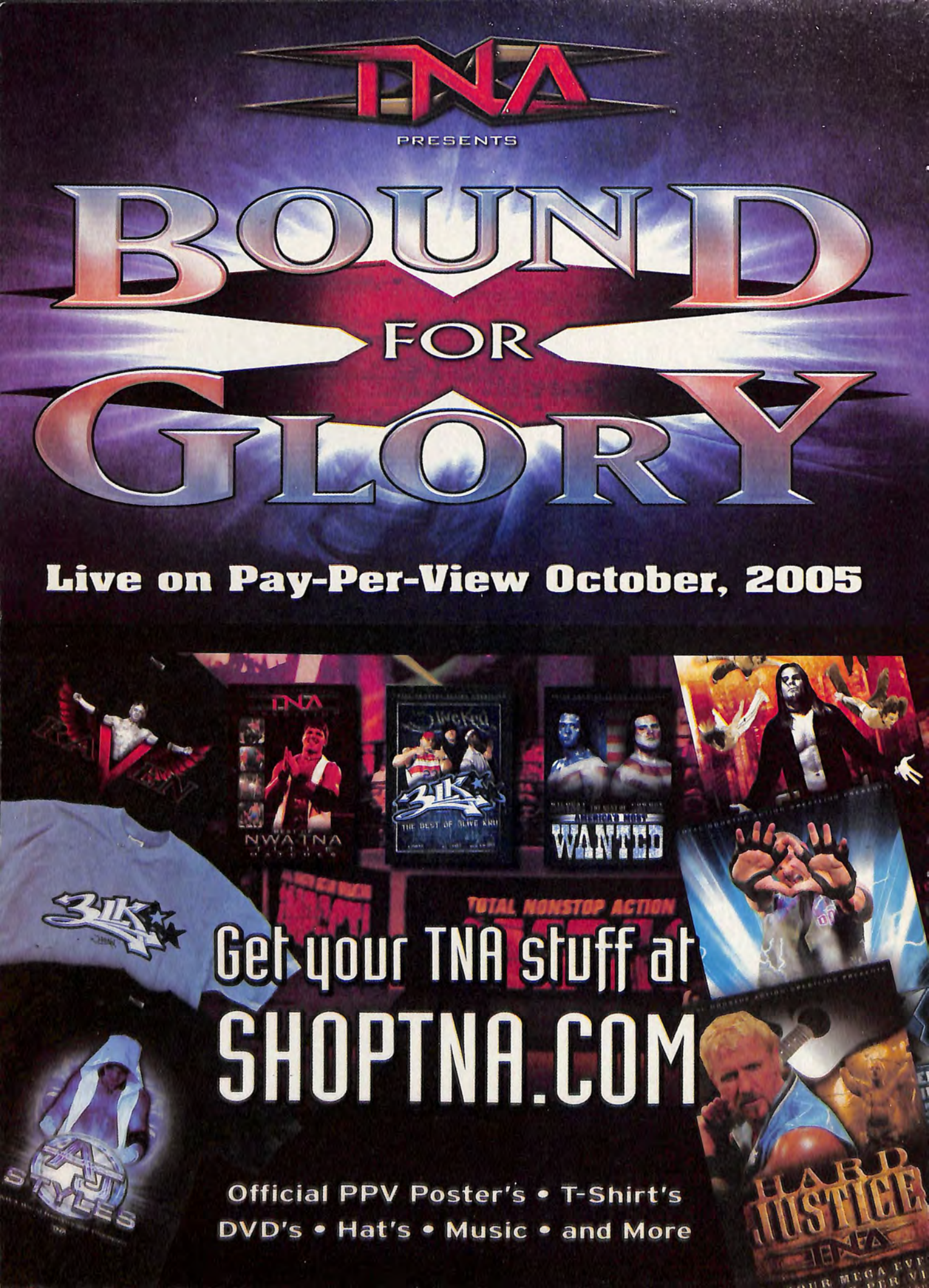
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from the desk of...

MY JOB INTERVIEW with London Publishing back in 1978 was a memorable experience. Aside from the fact that it was my first opportunity to land a full-time job, for young people preparing for a career in journalism, it was a special time.

In 1972, *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein began to unravel the Watergate scandal, ultimately leading to the resignation of President Richard Nixon in 1974. The brilliant investigative work of these two young men was memorialized in a terrific film, *All The President's Men*, with Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman in the lead roles, in 1976.

In the late-'70s, there were a lot of Woodward and Bernstein wannabes, and jobs in journalism were scarce. At the time I was called in to talk to the folks at London, I was still a college junior, but this was an opportunity I didn't want to reject out of hand. I had a part-time sports gig with one of the nation's largest newspapers, and I was the editor-in-chief of my college newspaper, but we were talking about full-time employment with a respected publishing company. If I called it a no-brainer back then, people would have looked at me funny. But it was.

The interview with Editor-in-Chief Peter King went well, and then he asked me to take a writing test. He handed me a photograph of Andre the Giant shaking hands with a little kid and told me to type a two-page story. I asked for some details, like who the kid was, and he just smiled at me. "Two pages," he said.

I don't recall exactly what I wrote, but I remember something about this young boy being Andre the Giant's "Deep Throat," a reference to the code name for the informant that had provided leads for Woodward and Bernstein during their investigation. When I finished, I felt pretty good about my work. It wouldn't have flown with the editors of *The Washington Post* (maybe *The New York Times?)*, but it was a fun read and it seemed to fit in with the style of the magazines at that time.

I think about this now because it was Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker's decision to run that very story (not my version, mind you) as this issue's "*PWI* Classic." At first I was a little hesitant, because it puts the *PWI* name on the type of story we no longer do. But the more I thought about it, the more I recalled all the letters we received when we ran a section of our most absurd stories in *Wrestling Superstars* a few years back and how many people have told me that they miss those days when wrestling was just plain fun—and so were the magazines.

But the world has changed. *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It To Beaver* are great for TV Land, and it's fun to lose ourselves in what now seems like a make-believe world with make-believe values. In 2005, however, reality TV rules, and a mom who pours a glass of milk for her boy when he gets home from school has gone the way of little boys mentoring giants.

One more thing: Thirty-two years after Watergate, we finally know the identity of Deep Throat. And I still don't know the identity of Andre's little helper! Where are Woodward and Bernstein when you need them?

Stu Saks
Publisher

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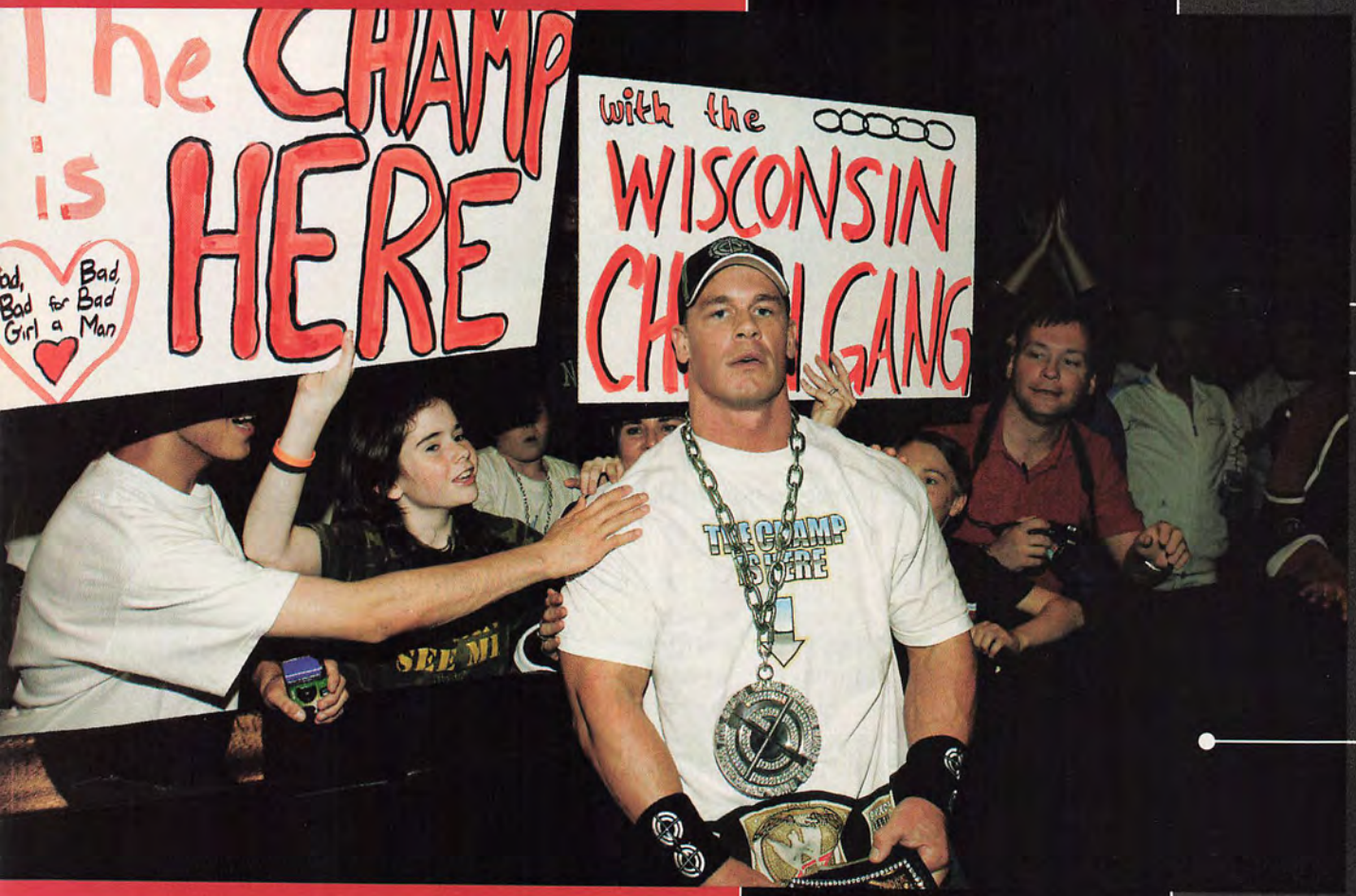
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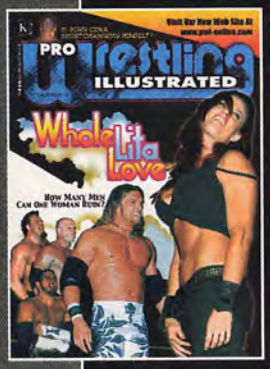

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The Rock's Brahma Bull Belt (WWEBELT07)
European Championship Belt (WWEBELT11)
Intercontinental Championship Belt (WWEBELT09)
Tag Team Championship Belt (WWEBELT10)
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Raw Heavyweight Championship Belt (WWEBELT20)
Stone Cold Smokin' Skull Belt (WWEBELT05)
United States Championship Belt (WWEBELT21)
SmackDown!™ Tag Team Championship Belt (WWEBELT22)
Classic Winged Eagle Championship Belt (WWEJAKKSBELT23)
Classic Intercontinental Championship Belt (WWEJAKKSBELT24)

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The Stone Cold Truth	(WWEDVD44)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO44)	$15.00
Armageddon 2003	(WWEDVD40)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO40)	$20.00
Survivor Series 2003	(WWEDVD39)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO39)	$20.00
Cause Stone Cold Said So	(WWEDVD42)	$10.00		
Undertaker: He Buries Them Alive	(WWEDVD43)	$10.00		
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Blood Bath: Steel Cage Matches	(WWEDVD35)	$30.00	(WWEVIDEO35)	$15.00
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Royal Rumble 2004	(WWEDVD46)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO46)	$15.00
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Raw 10th Anniversary	(WWEDVD20)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO20)	$15.00
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No Way Out 2003	(WWEDVD22)	$25.00	(WWEVIDEO22)	$20.00
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before the bell

Compiled by Will Welsh

Hardcore Tale

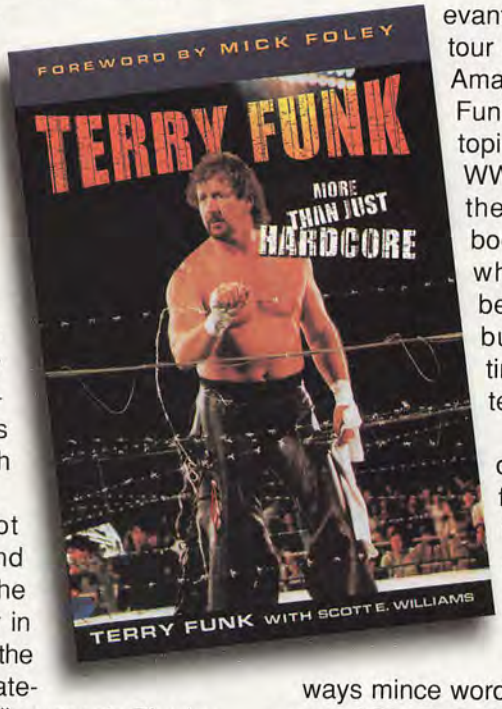
Anyone who reads *Terry Funk: More Than Just Hardcore* ($24.95, Sports Publishing LLC) should be left with three crystal-clear understandings about its author:

1. Family has always been the most important thing in Terry Funk's life.

2. He'd rather be on his Double-Cross Ranch than anywhere else in the world, and ...

3. He likes Mick Foley. A lot.

But exactly how Funk truly feels about the myriad topics he introduces in his entertaining and otherwise-enlightening autobiography is often more difficult to divine.



Maybe it's his abundant respect for the wrestling business and its rich history. Maybe he's too experienced to burn any bridges in a tell-all book. Whatever the case may be, Funk goes to great lengths to argue both sides of every issue.

For example, when he's not mocking Dusty Rhodes' lisp and squishy physique, he praises "The American Dream" for getting over in spite of his limitations. Nowhere in the book do we get the definitive statement that tells us whether Funk really respects Rhodes.

Fortunately, these perplexing passages don't detract from the book's entertainment value. The war stories and tales from the road are juicy, plentiful, sometimes poignant, and often funny. The funniest (and saddest) occur in a chapter he calls "The Doctor Is Out (Of His Mind!)" and dedicates to Dr. Jerry Graham, one of Funk's earliest traveling mates during his Amarillo days.

The reader, however, will enjoy the book just as much for what's not in there. A first-time author (with help from Scott E. Williams, a criminal justice reporter and wrestling columnist for *The Galveston County Daily News* in Texas), Funk is savvy enough to keep the self-congratulations on the shelf, though he can't resist the urge to revisit father Dory Sr.'s influence on the wrestling business throughout the book.

Readers with a less sophisticated appreciation for territorial wrestling and insider jargon might get antsy, but anyone interested in the old NWA will be riveted, even if the ever-loving son appears myopic at times. In Terry's telling, the Funks had a hand in the career of just about every wrestler who moseyed through the Lone Star State in the 1960s. Perhaps only those who were there can confirm or deny his accuracy.

To his credit, though, Funk stays relevant. Rather than take us on a guided tour of every back road in the greater Amarillo area during the '60s and '70s, Funk sinks his teeth into more timely topics, such as Vince McMahon and WWE, the rise and fall of WCW, and the role ECW played in the 1990s boom period. Sure, there are times when Funk waxes nostalgic and bemoans the manner in which the business has evolved. But at no time does he come across as a bitter old man.

If anyone has earned the right to declare a strong opinion about professional wrestling and the performers, promoters, and bookers who make it what it is, it's Terry Funk. Yet he shows tremendous restraint and class throughout. Make no mistake, he doesn't always mince words. Pay close attention to his treatment of Ric Flair, Kevin Nash, and Paul Heyman. But unlike some previous wrestling autobiographers, Funk doesn't use his forum to run anyone down.

It's clear that at some point in the writing process, Terry Funk decided he was going to play it down the middle when broaching some controversial subjects. So we'll play our review down the middle, too, giving the hardcore legend 2½ suplexes out of five for his maiden literary voyage.

—Frank Krewda

Talkin' Trash

Here's a list of the top 10 wrestling-related items you've been talking about lately, and our gut reaction to each.

10. Matt Morgan returns to WWE TV with a stuttering gimmick. *Duh-duh-duh-duh* dumb.

9. TNA's Shark Boy files a trademark infringement suit against director Robert Rodriguez and Dimension films over the film *The Adventures Of Shark Boy And Lava Girl In 3-D*. We smell Shark Boy's biggest payday (by far) yet.

8. Victoria turns heel following a losing effort in a bikini contest. By now we would have thought that WWE executives would have called a halt to bikini contests. Haven't they realized that they always end in a catfight?

7. John Cena releases his first album, *You Can't See Me*. It's better than every other WWE release in history! (Of course, that's not saying all that much.)

6. The Hurricane and Rosey reign as Raw tag team champions. Here's their newest excuse for not being able to fly: Their title belts weight them down.

5. Kurt Angle abuses Booker T's wife, Sharmel. Angle claims the duo have chemistry. We claim Angle is a fruit loop.

4. TNA's contract with Fox Sports Net expires with the promotion hoping to land a two-hour Monday night slot on Chicago-based WGN (and then that deal falls through). You have to give it to TNA executives: They roll the dice.

3. UPN releases fall lineup with *Smackdown* penciled in on Friday nights. If Monday night wasn't officially wrestling night before, it certainly is now. Fridays?

2. Smackdown champion John Cena joins the Raw roster. If you think you've heard edgy raps from Cena before, bets are that you haven't heard anything yet.

1. ECW One Night Stand. There were better ECW pay-per-views back in the day, but there was never one quite so emotional.

The Internet Insider

The following wrestling-related items were culled from various wrestling-related Web sites—or were they? See if you can pick out the items that were actually reported on the Internet (which doesn't necessarily mean that they're true) and the ones we blatantly made up. The answers appear at the end of this column on page 11.

1. WWE's Vice President of Talent Relations John Laurinaitis, already an unpopular figure among most WWE wrestlers, became even less popular after mandating weekly weigh-ins. At the first weigh-in, Lauraintis not only recorded each wrestler's weight, he also judged them on their physiques. He then told them whether they needed to put on weight or take some off, how much, and how quickly they needed to reach their goals. Those said to be most aggravated by the situation were the cruiserweights, most of whom were told to put on an inordinate number of pounds.

2. During an independent show in Florida, a number of young wrestlers approached and talked with Dusty Rhodes. Dustin Rhodes watched the wrestlers approach his father with amusement and began joking with people that they were all doing so because of the power Dusty wielded within TNA. Larry Zbyszko, who also worked the show, had to embarrassingly tell Dustin what everyone else already knew—that Dusty was no longer TNA's booker and that he no longer held real power with the promotion.

3. John Cena and WWE had an embarrassing moment while guesting on XM radio's *Opie & Anthony Show*. Opie and Anthony, who at one point were huge wrestling fans and who frequently had wrestlers on as guests during the '90s boom period, told Cena that they had stopped watching wrestling for a while, but had recently gotten back into it. Then, shortly thereafter, they asked him, "Who is John Bradshaw Layfield?"

4. During a meeting between The Hurricane and DC Comics Vice President Dan Didio, Hurricane pitched the idea of a Hurricane comic book that would detail the exploits of his in-ring career. Didio was at first chilly to the idea, but he was so impressed with Hurricane's comic knowledge that he offered him an opportunity to write a one-shot Green Lantern story. Hurricane, a huge Green Lantern fan, accepted. His story is slated to hit newsstands this fall, and if it sells well, he's expected to write more.

Bizarro 12 Questions With ... JBL

We value our health, which is why that there are certain questions that we'd never ask certain professional wrestlers during an interview. These are those questions:

12. When you were in Undertaker's Ministry of Darkness, did 'Taker ask you to manage the group's investment portfolio?

11. We liked your Justin "Hawk" Bradshaw look. Ever thought about going really blond again?

10. You and The Blue Meanie ... where did the love go?

9. Do you miss the barroom brawls WWE used to sponsor?

8. When you were in The Acolytes, what did those arcane sym bols on your chest signify?

7. Were those idiotic antics in Germany worth losing your CNBC show over?

6. Are you concerned that you display too much of a sensitive side?

5. The Sandman just outright rocks, doesn't he?

4. How can you defend your hatred of ECW in light of the fact that you held the WWE hardcore title 17 different times?

3. Faarooq held you down all those years, didn't he?

2. Any truth to what Paul Heyman said about your title reign at ECW One Night Stand?

And the number-one question that we'd never ask JBL:

1. So, how can you prove to me how tough you are?

We Heard That!

"To tell you the truth, I don't have a lot of time to deal with something I don't really believe in."

—Dusty Rhodes, commenting on his position as TNA head booker one day after losing the position, in an interview with Live Audio Wrestling

"The reality is I'd love to be able to be associated with businessmen who were in the wrestling business, not wrestlers who thought they were businessmen."

—Bill Goldberg, commenting on whether he'd consider working for Jeff and Jerry Jarrett in TNA, in an interview with *The Post And Courier*

"The ECW Arena isn't the ECW Arena. It's a bingo hall. It doesn't even look like the ECW Arena. I don't even know why they continue to run the ECW Arena."

—Tommy Dreamer, commenting on the promoters behind Hardcore Homecoming deciding to run their show at Viking Hall (the former ECW Arena), on *WWE Byte This*

"Hulk Hogan keeps throwing my name out there, and I'd definitely entertain doing a match with that guy."

—Steve Austin, in an interview with the *Calgary Sun*

"I'm still capable of going out and performing, but through the years I've spoken very vehemently about guys outliving their usefulness in the ring. I can go in the ring and tell a good story, but I think the fans want the athleticism that goes along with that. In TNA, if I wrestle, I'm able to help one person. As a road agent and head of talent relations, I can help an entire crew. Although it's great to hear the crowd again, I don't need to hear it like [Ric] Flair or [Terry] Funk to satiate my appetite for glory."

—Shane Douglas, in an interview with syndicated wrestling columnist Alex Marvez

"We all hate him because he's so [expletive] great. He was so great so early, everybody hates him."

—Kevin Nash, talking about The Rock, in an interview with the *Pro Wrestling Torch*

caption me!

Think you're a better writer than the editors at *PWI?* Here's your chance to prove it, punk! This photo of Ted DiBiase pointing to (for some strange reason) Sherri Martel during the first WrestleReunion weekend in January demands a short, concise, and downright uproarious caption. If you think you're up to the task, e-mail your zany quips to prowrestlingillustrated@yahoo.com, or slap a stamp on an envelope and snail-mail it to "Caption Me!" Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Three issues from now, we'll share with you the best of the bunch—and the funnier the better.

June's Best

"Dig up Frank Gotch, Lou Thesz, and Joe Stecher—it's ass-kickin' time!"
—Kelly Monro, KellyMonro007@aol.com

"Hey, Page, would ya mind smokin' outside? You're stinking up my mask!"
—Richard Monsey II, ricky2dopee@hotmail.com

This is TNA's next generation of superstars. Yeah, right, and then we woke up from the nightmare!
—Jason Buhn, hunterbuhn@yahoo.com

Introducing the cast of *The Surreal Life VII* on VH-1 ...
—Kyler Eastwick, Ardmore, PA

"One little, two little, three little has-beens ..."
—Frank G. Lloyd Jr., Richwood, WV

Answers to Internet Insider:

Items 1 and 4 are totally made up.

ringside

With Will Welsh

ECW ONE NIGHT Stand wasn't meant to change the face of wrestling. That was never the idea. It was simply designed to be a one-shot pay-per-view aimed at capitalizing on the popularity of *The Rise And Fall Of ECW* DVD and the wave of ECW nostalgia that came along with its near-record-breaking sales. Yet, only a few days after **"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin** closed the show while sharing a beer with **The Sandman**, it looked like **Paul Heyman** and company might have cleared the way for yet another wrestling revolution.

One Night Stand wasn't a perfect show. In many cases, the wrestling was sloppy. There were no four-star matches, let alone five-star matches. The wrestlers we expected to deliver in a huge way didn't (**Chris Benoit**, **Eddie Guerrero**, **Rey Misterio Jr.**), and the wrestlers who did deliver the most exciting matches (**Mike Awesome**, **Masato Tanaka**, **The Dudley Boyz**, **Tommy Dreamer**, and Sandman) did so mostly because it had been a long time since we had seen such genuinely entertaining train wrecks.

And none of that really mattered.

ECW One Night Stand presented ECW exactly as it was: a promotion that was perfectly imperfect—and that reality is what made the promotion so darn good. No matter what the history books end up saying, ECW *was* about more than blood and guts. It was also about more than classic catch-as-catch-can matches. At its core, ECW was about heart and emotion—emotion between the wrestlers and the promotion, the wrestlers and the fans, and the fans and the promotion.

On paper, it looked as if the Rey Misterio Jr.-Psicosis match had a chance to tear the house down at ECW One Night Stand. It didn't come close. Neither did any of the other matches. And that didn't seem to matter.

ECW existed as long as it did because it had an abundance of heart—and ECW One Night Stand was a celebration of that heart.

Joey Styles, **Rob Van Dam**, Paul Heyman, and Tommy Dreamer all had tears in their eyes at some point in the evening. So did a lot of the fans at ringside. Heyman cut one of his famous shoot promos, taking vicious shots at **Eric Bischoff**, **Edge**, and **John Bradshaw Layfield**. Styles was so choked up that he could barely find his voice at the start of the show. Dreamer was all smiles even as his face was covered by blood.

Van Dam, however, provided one of the night's most gripping highlights by delivering the greatest promo of his career. He abused WWE's creative team for saddling him with uninspired promos. He called out the WWE Crusaders who attended the show and dared them to try to take the credit for the pay-per-view's success. He spilled his soul while explaining how difficult it was for him to sit out of the show because of his bum knee.

RVD had never before seemed so real or so vulnerable. When he left the ring, after fending off an attack by **Rhyno**, it was as if he had left half his heart in the middle of the squared circle.

The fans attending the pay-per-view were the night's other big story. Given the fact that WWE was promoting the pay-per-view, it wouldn't have been shocking to see an ECW audience sit on its hands for the very first time. After all, nobody was sure how ECW's rabid fan base would take to a WWE-sponsored ECW pay-per-view. Would they attend, or would the audience be filled with WWE fans who happened to hear about the pay-per-view and decided to check it out for themselves?

True ECW fans showed up. The fans at the Hammerstein were some of the loudest we've heard in the past few years—as well as some of the crudest. WWE censors had a party with the mute button, as fans had their way with Bischoff, Edge, JBL, and **Kurt Angle** while reintroducing us to some of their most infamous and most vulgar chants. It was a rau-

Any doubts about whether One Night Stand would draw a true ECW crowd were erased very early. This guy and a few thousands of his friends made the show special.

cous crowd that knew what it liked and didn't like—and what it didn't like was WWE's involvement in the pay-per-view.

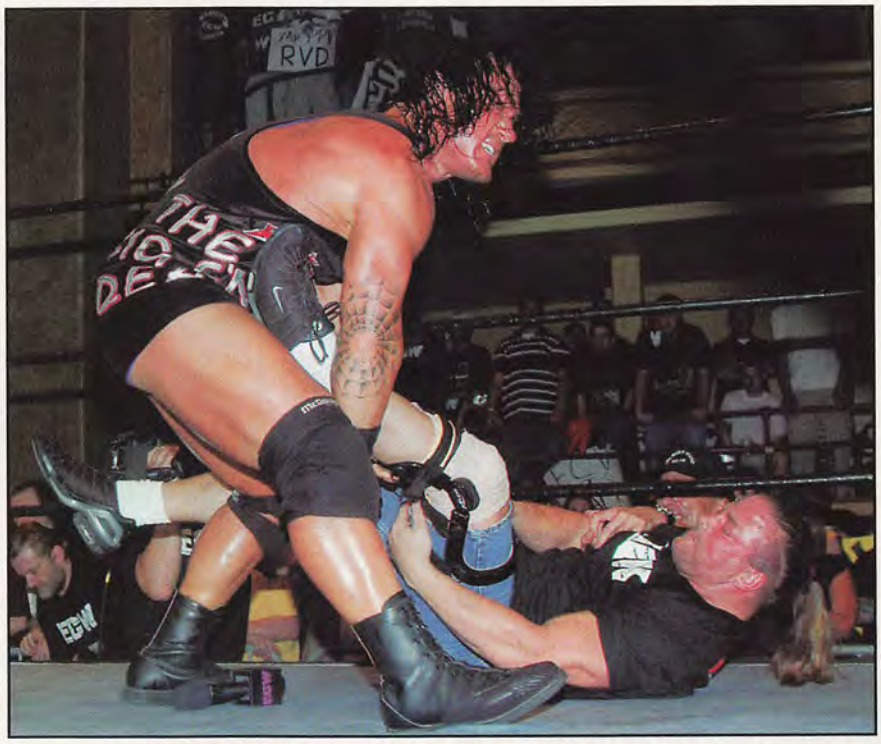
When I first heard about WWE's invasion angle, I have to admit that I thought it was a bad idea. *The last thing One Night Stand needs to become,* I thought, *is the WCW invasion of 2001 all over again.* However, after watching the pay-per-view, the decision to have the WWE Crusaders sit in the stands and egg on the crowd was probably one of the best decisions WWE could have made. The presence of Bischoff, Edge, Angle, and Bradshaw—as well as the rest of the Raw and Smackdown crews—gave the fans at the Hammerstein Ballroom an enemy, someone to root against and spew their venom toward. Without the presence of the WWE crews, it's quite possible that the fans would have been too respectful.

One other point worth making in regard to this thrilling ECW pay-per-view is that after about two years of reconditioning its fan base to accept and appreciate much less extreme in-ring action, WWE sponsored a show that featured a number of broken tables, a multitude of incredibly stiff chair shots, and one flaming table—all of which made the following evening's *Raw* seem quite tame by comparison.

If WWE is going to embrace the ECW brand name and do more with it in the future, which is a virtual certainty considering the reviews the show received and its projected buy rate, WWE management is going to have to balance the line between its current product and what the ECW brand would present. Right now, there's too much of a disparity between the two—and it was clear that for one show at least, the ECW way of doing things is the more entertaining (if not family-friendly) of the two.

Just two nights before One Night Stand took place, another ECW reunion show was held at Viking Hall (the former ECW Arena) in Philadelphia. Hardcore Homecoming featured many of the same wrestlers who appeared at One Night Stand (but not the WWE-contracted wrestlers, of course), as well as former ECW wrestlers currently under contract to TNA, namely **Jerry Lynn**, **Raven**, and **Shane Douglas**. The highlight of that night was **Terry Funk** defeating **Sabu** and Douglas in a barbed-wire match that harkened back to their 1994 classic.

TNA was without a television home at press time, and its negotiations with Chicago-based WGN for a two-hour Monday night time slot broke off, but TNA officials were remaining optimistic that they'd be returning to national TV in the very



Rhyno made sure RVD's best promo ever came to a violent end. For some reason, he didn't like what Van Dam had to say. Neither, of course, did the WWE Crusaders. Their presence, believe it or not, added a lot to the event.

THE GREATS OF THE GAME

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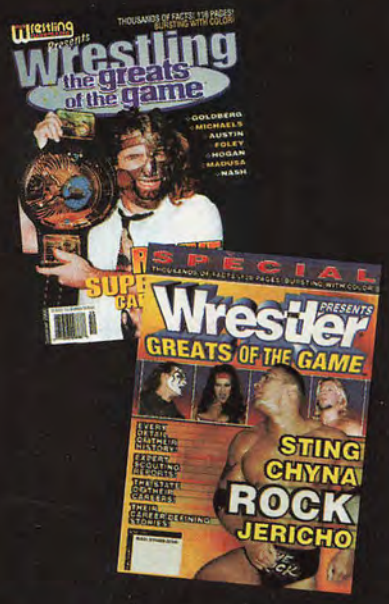

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near future. As of press time, TNA officials wouldn't confirm which networks they were in negotiations with, but a return to Fox Sports Net and Spike TV (once WWE's contract expires and it returns to the USA Network in the fall) seemed to be the most likely scenarios. Of course, in order to survive, TNA is going to have to shore up its television situation as quickly as possible. National TV is an absolute must if the promotion is going to be able to support its monthly pay-per-views.

Beginning in the fall, *Smackdown* will be airing on Friday nights. This move comes after UPN executives made the decision to run a two-hour block of 30-minute sitcoms (including one featuring **Chris Rock**) on Thursdays to try to take advantage of the demise of NBC's Thursday night "must-see TV" lineup. UPN President **Dawn Ostroff** told *Variety* that WWE "has a hugely loyal audience, and they will follow the show to Friday."

Whether that turns out to be the case remains to be seen, but WWE is hopeful that it will at least retain its current rating level.

That does it for me this month, fans. Enjoy your wanderings. ☐

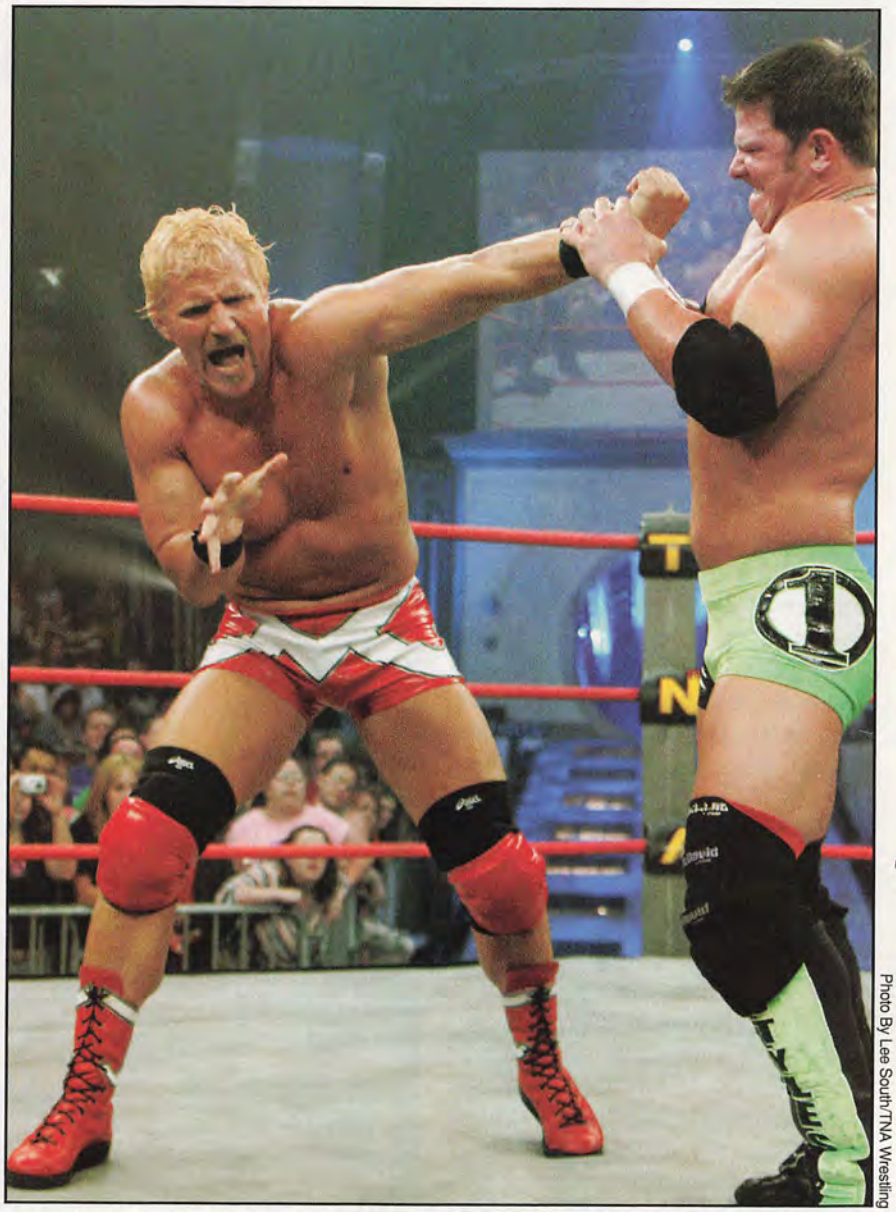

Photo By Lee South/TNA Wrestling

As spring became summer, A.J. Styles, Jeff Jarrett, and all their TNA friends (and enemies) had no national TV outlet. They seemed confident they soon would get one, though.

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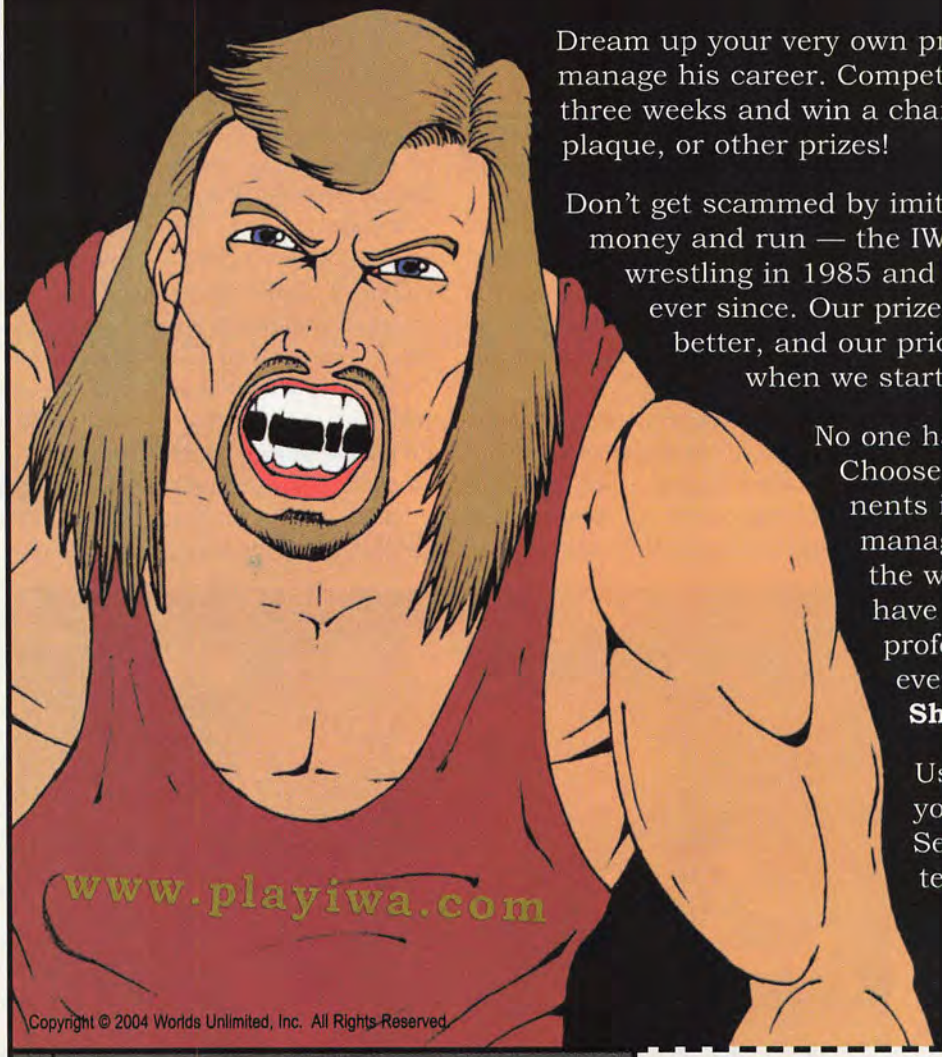

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WEAR-DOWN HOLDS

1. Airplane spin
2. Arm drag
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4. Asian spike
5. Atomic drop
6. Bear hug
7. Bite
8. Body slam
9. Body tackle
10. Bulldog
11. Chicken wing
12. Choke slam
13. Claw
14. Clothesline
15. Cross body block
16. Double axehandle
17. Drop kick
18. Eagle split
19. Elbow smash
20. Eye gouge
21. Face rake
22. Fireman's carry ram
23. Flying body press
24. Flying clothesline
25. Flying drop kick
26. Flying elbow drop
27. Flying head butt
28. Flying mare
29. Forearm smash
30. Foreign object
31. Full nelson
32. Giant swing
33. Grapevine
34. Hair pull
35. Hammer lock
36. Head lock
37. Head stomp
38. Hip roll
39. Irish whip
40. Knee drop
41. Leg lock
42. Leg sweep
43. Manager interference
44. Monkey flip
45. Overhead toss
46. Pole ram
47. Reverse chin lock
48. Rolling scissors
49. Rope burn
50. Russian sickle
51. Savate kick
52. Scissors grip
53. Shoulder breaker
54. Slingshot
55. Snap mare
56. Step-over toe hold
57. Suplex
58. Surfboard
59. Turnbuckle smash
60. Wrist lock

SET-UP HOLDS

61. Abdominal stretch
62. Avalanche
63. Backbreaker
64. Backroll press
65. Belly to belly
66. Big splash
67. Boston crab
68. Brain buster
69. Camel clutch
70. Cobra clutch
71. Cradle
72. Crucifix
73. DDT
74. Figure four
75. Flying leg drop
76. Gourd buster
77. Hurricanrana
78. Moonsault
79. Neckbreaker
80. Piledriver
81. Power bomb
82. Power slam
83. Scorpion deathlock
84. Sleeper
85. Slingshot suplex
86. Spine buster
87. Stunner
88. Sunset flip
89. Superplex
90. Texas cloverleaf

YOUR NAME (PRINT NEATLY) _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE _____

WRESTLER'S NAME (DO NOT USE ANY REAL PRO WRESTLER NAMES) _____

WEAR-DOWN HOLDS: *Choose 10 of the holds at the left numbered 1-60. Only use a hold once.*

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

6 _____ 7 _____ 8 _____ 9 _____ 10 _____

SET-UP HOLDS: *Choose 5 of the holds at the left numbered 61-90. Only use a hold once.*

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

FINISHING HOLD: *Create your own custom final maneuver or choose a hold from our list.* _____

in focus

By Dave Lenker

ONE NIGHT STAND: WHAT WE LEARNED

There are so many approaches to watching a wrestling pay-per-view. There's the WrestleMania approach, which to me means you go in expecting that because it's WrestleMania, it's going to be good, no matter what you might think of the lineup on paper. In recent years, it has been.

Then there's the overhype approach. Maybe the lineup doesn't look great as a whole, but there is at least one match that will make giving up three hours of your time and 35 dollars of your bank balance worth it. You're convinced that one match will be beyond amazingly, spectacularly sensational. And the wrestlers involved in most instances can't possibly live up to your grandiose expectations.

Then there's the underhype approach, the one in which the buildup is so poor and underwhelming that you almost forget about the show entirely. But you order it anyway, half-expecting to be dozing off an hour before you even get to the main event. Yet somewhere in the back of your mind, you have this thought that your expectations are so low that you'll be surprised by what you get and actually enjoy the show.

Then there was my approach to the ECW One Night Stand PPV. I had no expectations, good or bad, going in. I couldn't even remember much of the lineup. I figured it had a chance to be great, a chance to be horrendous, and a chance to be anything in between. When it was over, there had been no spectacular matches, but we sure got about 160 minutes of emotion, passion, insanity, and, most importantly, fun. And we all should have learned a few things. To wit:

•The Sandman might never get old. He's not even a decent wrestler in 2005, just as he wasn't a decent wrestler in 1997, but damn if he can't still do all that he does as well as ever. That ring entrance is still electric.

•Lance Storm was underutilized in WWE after all. At one point during his WWE career, I grew weary of all the loyal Stormtroopers out there begging for their man to be used better. After watching him beat Chris Jericho in the ONS opener, I'm convinced they were right. The match wasn't fantastic, but Storm sure wasn't boring. If he really is through as an active wrestler and is content to devote himself full-time to his new Storm Wrestling Academy in Calgary, good for him. But the sport will miss him as a performer.

•Joey Styles is very over-the-top and a little *too* passionate at times, and some of his comments are forced, but boy does he add a lot of energy and emotion to a show. And this show would have had both in abundance even with *no one* calling it. Styles really stands out as someone who makes an effort to familiarize himself with every wrestler on the card. It felt so strange and yet so refreshing to be getting so much background on the wrestlers as they competed. Plus, Styles genuinely seems to love what he's watching. Michael Cole could learn a lot from the Styles ap-

Lance Storm's run in WWE was anything but spectacular, but if his last WWE appearance really was at ECW One Night Stand, he went out on a high note. And he convinced Dave Lenker that WWE didn't fully appreciate his skills.

proach to wrestling broadcasting.

•Mick Foley does a lot of things in this sport very well. Color commentary ain't one of those things.

•Vince McMahon does have a heart. He could have saved himself a few bucks and not invited the likes of Roadkill, Danny Doring, Jason, and Gary Wolfe to appear. They did little more than make cameos. But these "minor" players were a major part of what made ECW what it was. They deserved to be there.

•Vince McMahon still doesn't *fully* understand or appreciate the ECW experience. If he was going to give us matches between current WWE stars who happened to be ECW alumni on this show, he should have insisted that current WWE rivalries be shelved for a night. ECW fans don't remember Eddie Guerrero as a brooding heel who bails out of the ring to stall and infuriate his opponent—in this case, Chris Benoit. They remember him going all-out in a series with Dean Malenko. That's the Guerrero they wanted to see, and they were disappointed. Heck, when Rey Misterio Jr.'s 619 got booed earlier in the night because it is perceived to be a WWE move (albeit a cool one), someone should have taken notice and made the appropriate adjustments.

•Rob Van Dam can talk. Very well. Maybe WWE Creative will take the hint (okay, it was more than a hint) when he returns and allow him to say more than "cool" and "whatever." Shortly after RVD began delivering the most inspired promo of his life, his voice got so raspy that I thought I had zoned out for a few seconds and one of the WWE stars on hand had grabbed a microphone and begun responding to him. Where did that raspiness come from? How about that passion?

•Even on an ECW PPV, WWE can't avoid the requisite few gaps in logic. When seen on WWE TV earlier in the week (twice), Rhyno was one of the ECW invaders. Then he attacked Rob Van Dam on the pay-per-view as RVD was ripping the WWE Crusaders. Heyman and even Styles are usually sticklers for details, but no explanation was offered here.

•Bill Alfonso is still annoying. I understand the whistle is part of the presentation with him—I just don't miss hearing it every week.

•Masato Tanaka is still insane. Does he still take the kind of abuse from chairs and tables that he took from Mike Awesome at ONS (and routinely took from Awesome at ECW shows about six years ago) all the time in Japan? If so, I find it remarkable that his skull hasn't caved in. It still hurts to watch these two against each other.

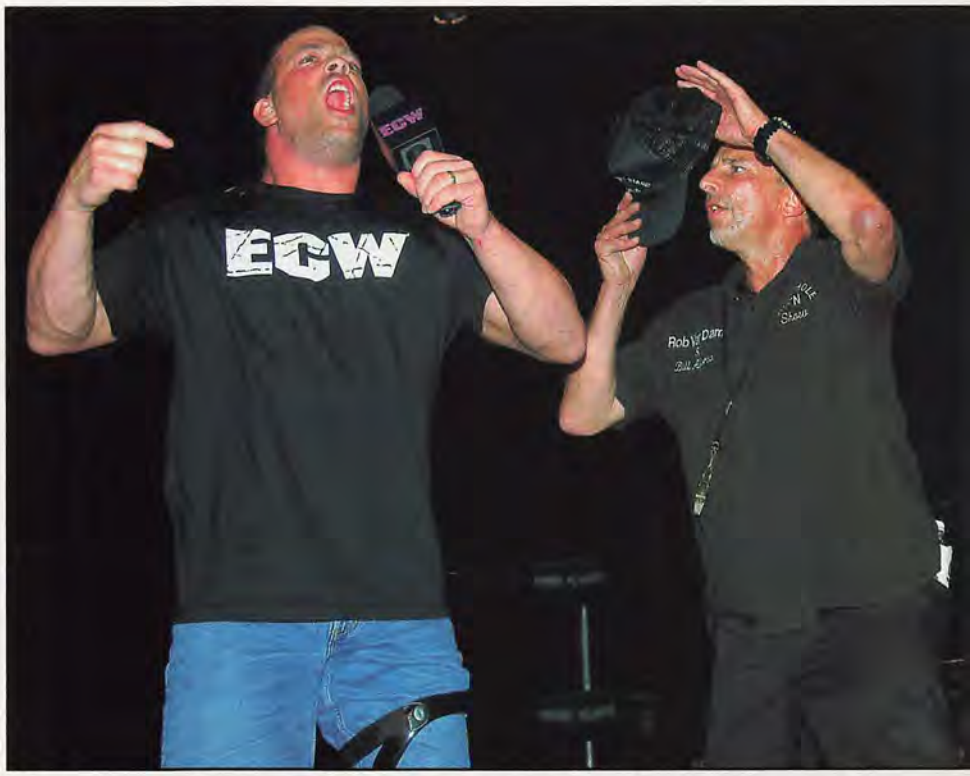
•Being married to a WWE executive has benefits. It's uncanny, but most of my memories of Beulah McGillicutty have her wearing a skirt. Usually a teensy-tiny one. Somehow—I'm not sure exactly how—that little detail added to her performances in catfights with Francine. Ditto for run-ins with Tommy Dreamer (who's now her husband and the father of her children) that inevitably ended with her getting piledriven after being held upside-down in the air for an eternity. But when she joined in the fun in the ring during the Dreamer/Sandman-Dudley Boyz main event and catfought with Francine one more time, she got to wear pants. *Pants?!* Come on, Beulah!

And, finally, one very important thing we did *not* learn from the One Night Stand pay-per-view:

•ECW has a viable future. At times, it felt like the entire show was just a wonderfully exhausting nostalgia trip, a one-and-done show, as the two main anti-ECW WWE heels, Kurt Angle and Eric Bischoff, got theirs in the end. Angle got choked out by Taz (back to one "z" for one night), while everyone, it seemed, got a pound of the Bisch's flesh.

On another level it felt like the first step toward the relaunch of the ECW brand. It's a virtual certainty that the ECW PPV will go down as a major financial success (perhaps as the second most successful WWE show of the year behind WrestleMania 21), and thus WWE will keep the ECW name alive in some form. But Vince McMahon and those in his inner circle had better think this through very carefully before making a final decision as to what form it will take. I'm not sure the raw emotion that we all felt while watching One Night Stand can be duplicated often … or ever again.

(Have a comment or question about "In Focus" or anything else you see in ***PWI?*** *You can contact Dave Lenker via e-mail at dave_lenker@yahoo.com.)* □



RVD showed a lot of people at ONS that he can cut an amazing promo. As for Bill Alfonso, that whistle that he so loves to blow is as shrill as ever.

off the top rope

By Brandi Mankiewicz

If you wish to contribute to Brandi's mailbag, send your letters to:
TOP ROPE Box 1148 Ft. Washington, PA 19034
Or send e-mail to: **offthetoprope@yahoo.com**

(Editor's note: The opinions expressed in this column are those of the letter writers and Brandi Mankiewicz herself. They do not necessarily reflect the editorial views of this magazine.)

JUNE IS A good month for weddings, historically. While most brides just go along with tradition, they really have no idea what makes June the magical time to get hitched. Well, maybe it's because in medieval times, when people bathed only a few times a year, June was a month when most of the population would be somewhat clean. The brides would carry fragrant bouquets of flowers to not only ward off evil spirits, but to mask the pungent smell wafting up from their own bodies.

That reminds me—there's something rotten in the world of sports entertainment. Ah, yes, Lita and Edge. Or is it Lita and Kane? Lita and Matt Hardy, maybe? At this point, we all need a scorecard to keep up with this trollop's latest fling. What happened to her "female empowerment" crap? Not too long ago, she was a crusader for do-gooder girls and their flights of feminist fancy. Makes me really wonder how she became "Miss Congeniality" in ECW. Just how friendly was she to the roster?

Fear not, my minions, I would never use my exquisite female goodies to entice men to do my bidding. I can get along just fine with my intelligence and quick wit. That is why I will always be your champion—and intellectual superior.

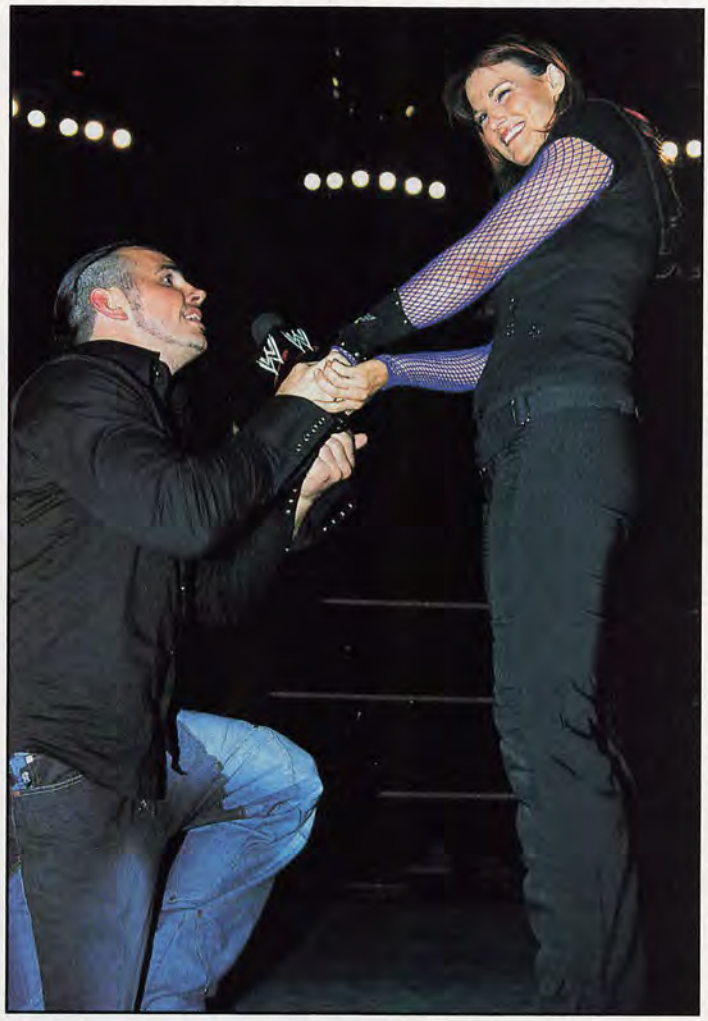
Dear Brandi,

I read about you picking an argument with about every person who e-mails you. Anyway, I think WWE Smackdown is getting boring because Raw has nearly all of the good wrestlers. One of Smackdown's good wrestlers, Eddie Guerrero, is getting wasted by WWE in this feud with Rey Misterio Jr. Truly, I think Eddie Guerrero is much better. Why do you think WWE makes Raw have all the better wrestlers?

WARREN HANSEN
Warrenator70@aol.com

Dear Warren,

Raw has the "better" wrestlers because its general manager, Eric Bischoff, drafted them. Theodore Long could make Smackdown better, but he's too busy being his own sideshow attraction with his "holla holla holla" crap. Raw also has years of tradition behind it, starting way back in 1993. That's a millennium in the minds of today's ADD fans—and in the minds of most wrestlers, too. The only sense of history and legitimacy attached to Smackdown was its title, which is a direct lineage to the original WWE heavyweight title. Of course, now that's on Raw, too, with John Cena, thanks to Mr. Bischoff.



Here's the happy couple getting engaged—okay, maybe not. Sorry, this was Lita's first engagement to Matt Hardy ... not to be confused with her engagement and marriage to Kane. Or Edge. Tell me, is there any guy from which this bimbo won't take a ring? Advice for the next in line: cubic zirconia.

Queen Brandi,

I have questions that need answering:

1. What is the difference between NWA and TNA on the ratings page? Does TNA third party its wrestlers to wrestle on, say, an NWA Bluegrass or NWA Virginia show? Three out of the top 10 chal-

lengers in the NWA are rated in TNA, and another three have TNA experience.

3. Do the returns of A.J. Styles and Christopher Daniels and the singing of Matt Hardy impress you about the future of ROH? As a huge fan of ROH, I am looking for the summer months to be exciting for wrestling fans everywhere.

Thank you, my queen.
T528WILSON@AOL.COM

Dear Moron,

First off, when sending a proper correspondence, it is customary to end it with a name. Without that name, the responder cannot properly address you.

Now, the main reason we have both NWA and TNA in our ratings is because they are essentially two fully functioning companies who just happen to share a few championship belts. We can't ignore either, so we choose to use them both. Not every NWA wrestler gets to compete for TNA.

Ring of Honor's immediate future looks healthy, but the return of Styles and Daniels is only part of the reason. While these two will help sustain the crowds for a bit, I think the true future of ROH can be found within its own roster. My money is on Colt Cabana and Nigel McGuinness as the next breakout stars of the company. Cabana is a genius with his comedic delivery and his carefree style in the ring. Nigel McGuinness lends a genuine brutality to every match in which he is involved.

As for Matt Hardy, his singing doesn't impress me at all. It's just as lousy as his brother's guitar-playing.

In case you're not familiar with Colt Cabana, he's the goofy cream filling to the ultra-serious C.M. Punk's hard cookie in The Second City Saints. Now that Punk is bound for WWE, it's time for Cabana to steal some crumbs and move up the ROH food chain.

Dear Brandi,

I am a huge fan of your column, and I love reading your remarks to some of the idiots out there. I am a big WWE fan and really think TNA just took up valuable time on FSN. I have been watching wrestling for a few years now, and in that time I have seen some really talented superstars and some really brave, heroic ones, too. Which is what brings me to my question. In 2003, WWE hired a one-legged wrestler named Zach Gowen. He won one match against Matt Hardy and then his contract expired. What I want to know is why WWE didn't renew his contract. A bunch of people have been telling me it's because Vince never liked Gowen, but if that were true, would he have gotten a contract in the first place? I was just wondering.

STEVEN BLUMENTHAL
billgoldbergy2j@yahoo.com

Dear Steven,

If you haven't noticed, Vince McMahon will work with anyone as long as he can exploit that person to make a quick buck. He's the P.T. Barnum of wrestling, showcasing any freak that he thinks might stir interest for even a moment. Then he disposes of said freak as soon as the cash stops rolling in. Zach was given a much better spot on the roster than his abilities should have afforded him. Any two-legged wrestler at his ability level would have been given a police outfit and told to act like a security guard for a skit. Instead, thanks to Mother Nature's cruelty, he was one leg short and sitting in the main event with Hulk Hogan. I'm not sure which fate is more cruel, honestly.

Letter of the month (taken verbatim from the actual letter to share my torture with you all):

Dear editor,

This is my fourth letter asking you a simple question. Is lita and kane really married in real life. That's all I asked you guys. If their not they shouldn't act like it on T.V. Because its not right or fair to their real wives. I used to love wrestling but I don't anymore. It's just lies and storylines. If people learn out the real truth they will stop watching too. So please write me back and tell me the truth. All I want to know is Are they really married in real-life? Because if their not they need to Quit acting like it on T.V. When I found out lita married Kane I was happy But I think the are not married. It hurt my feelings when you guys let them act like that on T.V. I won't be watching anymore its just lies and Storylines. people need to wake up and realize its just lies and its fake.

Thank you

JANET INMAN
Strawberry Plains, TN

Dear Loyal Reader,

***Ummmmmm* ... I can just imagine what you thought of Lita's marriage to Edge! I bet you were just about as happy as Matt Hardy.** □

press conference...

In spite of all his bluster, Jeff Jarrett had to know he was in trouble against A.J. Styles when Tito Ortiz signed on as guest referee. He was ... and Styles' third NWA title reign was about to start.

A.J. Styles

IT'S AMAZING TO watch how quickly some wrestlers shoot to the top of their profession. Find a way to connect with fans and the ascent can be almost meteoric.

It wasn't quite that easy for A.J. Styles, but for him to be able to boast that he won three NWA heavyweight championships before turning 27 is rather remarkable.

Only about a half-decade ago, he was toiling in NWA Wildside in his native Georgia and debating over whether to sign a WCW contract that would pay him $400 per week ... or to turn it down and keep his day job delivering spring water.

Would you believe he chose the spring water?

Obviously, a lot has changed since he made that decision. He did eventually sign with WCW and wrestled briefly for the company before it folded in 2001. Then, after that forgettable run in WCW, Styles became one of the hottest wrestlers on the independent circuit, competing in such promotions as NWA Wildside and Ring of Honor.

When he got the call from TNA prior to its startup in June 2002, he was poised to make a major impact. As the cornerstone of the X division, Styles introduced many fans to a new and innovative style of wrestling. It wasn't long before he was being touted as the franchise player of not just that X division, but of the entire organization. Three years later, he has those three NWA championships on his resume. His most recent title win took place at Hard Justice in May, as, with a little help from guest referee Tito Ortiz, he ended the one-year reign of Jeff Jarrett.

*While only in his sixth year in the sport, Styles is one of the most exciting and technically sound wrestlers in the game. In 2004, he was ranked eighth in the **"PWI** 500," higher than such superstars as Shawn Michaels, Chris Jericho, and Jarrett. He is the only triple crown winner in TNA history, having also held the NWA tag team title with Jerry Lynn and the X division championship four times.*

With so much going for him, hardcore wrestling fans wonder how much higher Styles can go on the success ladder. Contributing Writers Matt Brock, Liz Hunter, and Jason Langin were presented with the assignment of talking to this "phenomenal" NWA champion.

LIZ HUNTER: It's great to talk to you, A.J. It's an honor to interview the new and deserving NWA champ.

MATT BROCK: Oh, brother, here we go.

A.J. STYLES: Nice to see you, Liz. You, too, Matt. You're a legend in your business.

BROCK: Well, thanks. Maybe I should have let some of the younger guys handle this interview, like this rookie.

JASON LANGIN: Thanks for the vote of confidence Matt. How many years do I need to put in before you stop calling me that?

HUNTER: Guys, could we please get back to business? We're here to interview A.J. Styles.

> **"Jarrett and I have had quite a rivalry. It heats up now and then and then cools off for a while, but it's always there. And I think I've finally got the best of him. This win was definitely the sweetest. It felt like the start of something special."**

LANGIN: Right. Okay, A.J., how does your most recent victory over Jeff Jarrett compare to the others? You've won the title from him in 2003, in 2004, and now in 2005.

STYLES: It's weird that I've beaten him three times for each of my three titles. He's only beaten me for the belt once. Jarrett and I have had quite a rivalry. It heats up now and then and then cools off for a while, but it's always there. And I think I've finally got the best of him. This win was definitely the sweetest. It felt like the start of something special.

BROCK: Jarrett is crafty, though. You can't be thinking you've seen the last of him.

STYLES: I doubt it. I should say I *know* it. He is crafty, like you said. He's part snake, part weasel. He always finds a way to get himself involved in the most important situations. But you can't knock him too much. He's achieved a lot and he really did work very hard to put our company where it is. Personally, I hate the guy with a passion. Professionally, I have a lot of respect for him. Respect goes out the window when the bell rings, though.

HUNTER: Speaking of that company that Jarrett built, where do you see it going in the next few months and even years? Seems like it's always an uphill battle for TNA.

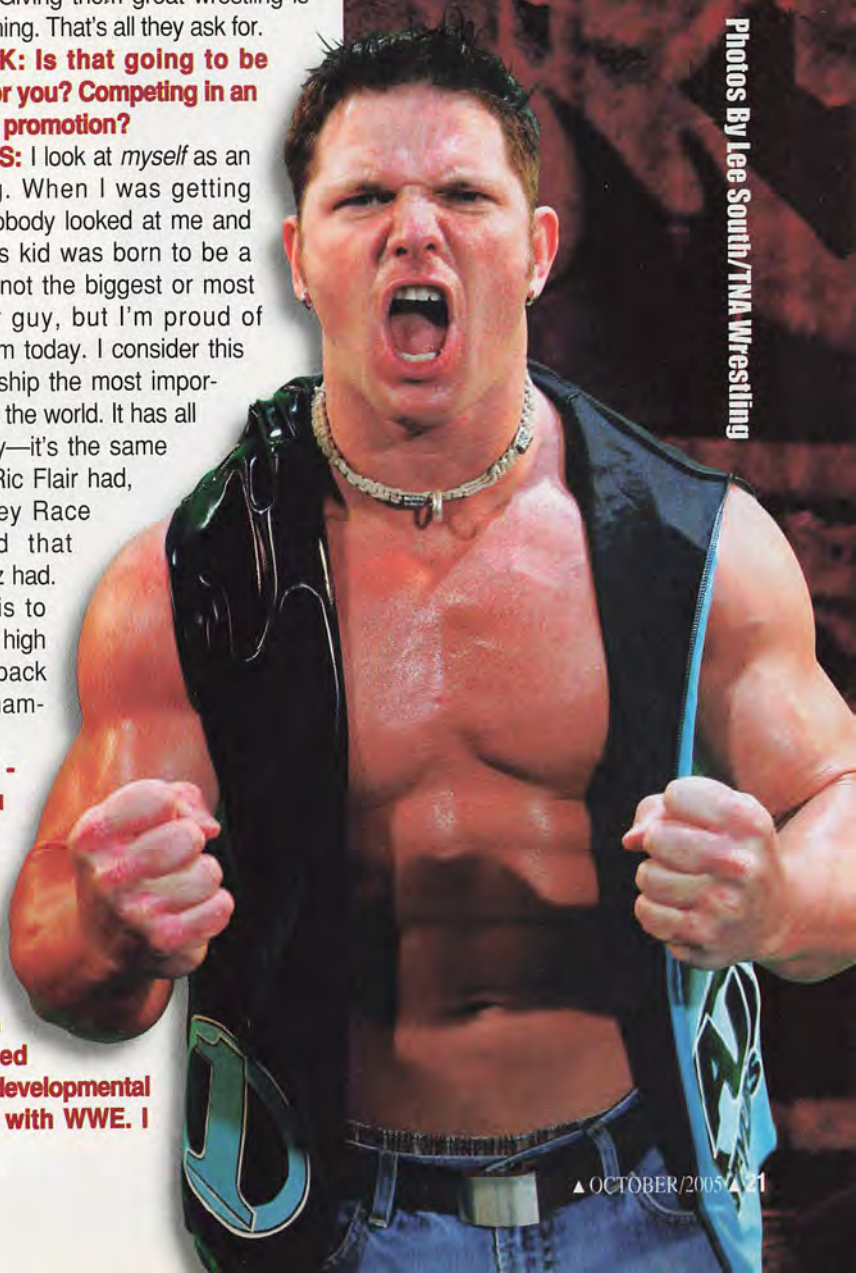
STYLES: I'm not one of the people running the show, so it's hard to say. I'm an optimist, but I know I need to be realistic. We're certainly an underdog. We just have to try to keep taking small steps forward and give people reasons to keep watching. Giving them great wrestling is the main thing. That's all they ask for.

BROCK: Is that going to be enough for you? Competing in an underdog promotion?

STYLES: I look at *myself* as an underdog. When I was getting started, nobody looked at me and said, "This kid was born to be a star." I'm not the biggest or most muscular guy, but I'm proud of where I am today. I consider this championship the most important title in the world. It has all the history—it's the same title that Ric Flair had, that Harley Race had, and that Lou Thesz had. My goal is to bring that high prestige back to this championship.

LANGIN: You made headlines a few years back when you turned down a developmental contract with WWE. I

Every issue, reporters from PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED will participate in an incisive press conference with a top wrestling star. The questions will be demanding. And the answers will reveal the innermost thoughts of the giants of the sport.



Photos By Lee South/TNA Wrestling

assume you still have no regrets.

STYLES: Like I've always said, I was flattered, but it was the right decision for my family. WCW had just folded, and I had only been there a short while. It just happened that TNA came along and offered me the opportunity to really go against some top guys on a grand stage right away. It's worked out great.

HUNTER: You know, I remember your days in WCW. You were teamed with Air Paris in the cruiserweight tag team division. That really *was* near the end. It must have been depressing seeing it all fall apart.

STYLES: It was. But I think it happened for a reason. When WCW got bought up, lots of guys were barely looked at. And those were all the guys I was competing against. Me, Kid Romeo, Elix Skipper, Jimmy Yang [Akio], and others. When TNA was ready to kick things off, we were all there just dying to get started.

LANGIN: I'll never forget those opening matches in the X division. You really changed the way fans viewed guys your size.

STYLES: That's what we hoped for. Our locker room had so many alumni from WCW and ECW. We knew how awful it was to lose our jobs. We were determined to not let it happen again. Our company needed money and the way we made money was by selling pay-per-views. A lot of people were paying just to see the X division.

BROCK: What do you think was your best match in the X division?

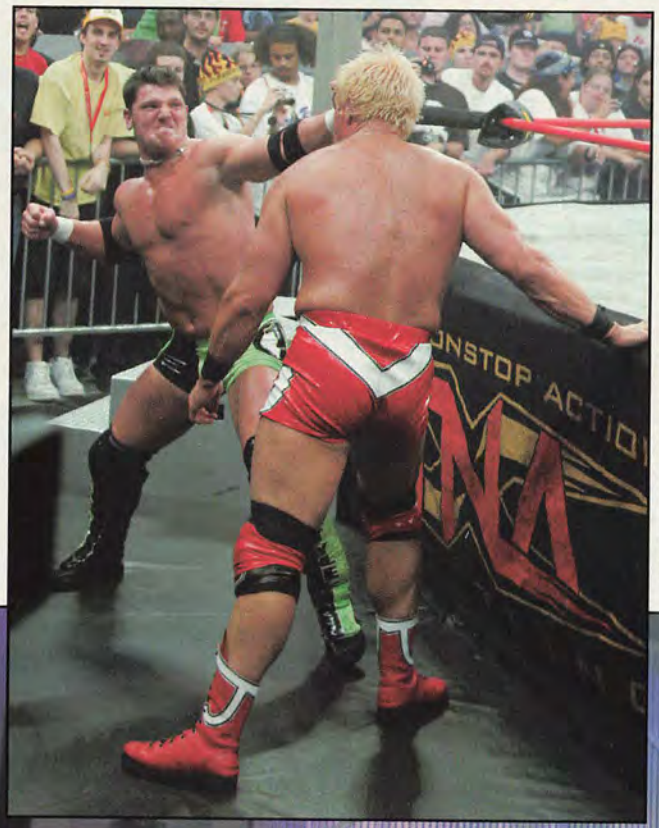
STYLES: I am a bit partial to those early days. The night I won my first title was special, but I think my title defense against Amazing Red was one of my favorites. He had so much hype surrounding him, and so many people thought he was going to beat me. I proved them wrong, though.

LANGIN: So what's the real difference between wrestling for the heavyweight title and the X division title?

STYLES: It's not that different for me. I go into the ring with the same general plan of attack with whoever I wrestle, whether it's a small guy like Red or a big guy like Abyss. Hit him hard, fast, and more times than he hits me.

HUNTER: Do you prefer one division to the other?

STYLES: I said about a year ago that I like the X division because those are the guys who are most like me. The guys



Styles outwrestled Jarrett for the NWA title at Hard Justice, but he outbrawled him at times, too (left). When it was over, Styles soaked in the cheers of the TNA faithful (below).

Photo By Vern Verna

Styles has, as he puts it, "been around the block a few times" with Chris Daniels (left). Maybe they could do an NWA title vs. Daniels' TNA X title bout. Styles would also like to face old rival Abyss (above) with the NWA gold on the line.

who will do whatever it takes to win. But that isn't to say that Abyss or Monty Brown won't. They just won't do many moonsaults off the top of a ladder. That's really the only difference. I asked to go back to the X division so I could help to strengthen that and make sure we had two real strong titles.

BROCK: You had a respectable run with the title during your first reign in 2003. Your second reign got cut short. What are you going to do this time to make sure this reign lasts longer?

STYLES: Just wrestle smarter, I think. I love the X division style, but I know that too much of that high-risk stuff can put an end to my career sooner than I would like. I'm trying to get it to the point where my suplexes and powerslams can gain me as many victories as a plancha could.

BROCK: You've done it all in TNA in a fairly short period of time. You even won the tag team title with Jerry Lynn a few years back. You seem like you enjoy looking for new challenges. Any chance you will look to go for that tag team gold again?

STYLES: Not in the near future. Tag team wrestling is a different ballgame, and you really need to be on the same page with your partner. Right now, I don't have anyone I can trust like that. Plus, I hate the feeling of losing a tag team match and knowing that it wasn't my fault. When it's one-on-one, the only person you can count on is you. That's what I want.

HUNTER: Is there anyone on the roster that you are looking forward to defending the title against?

STYLES: Well, I know Jarrett will be back, but I'm not necessarily looking forward to facing him again. There are a lot of other guys who deserve a shot. I'm thinking guys like Monty Brown, Abyss, Ron Killings. Even Chris Daniels. We've been around the block a few times. All of them are worthy contenders, and they all offer me a different kind of challenge. But I'm also looking forward to defending the title in a lot of the NWA territories if I can.

LANGIN: Any dream match candidates out there for you?

STYLES: I could probably come up with quite a few. Maybe The Great Muta.

LANGIN: That would be one heck of a match.

STYLES: I know. Muta has been around a long time, but I still think he's as tough as anyone.

BROCK: Let's wrap this up folks, all right? A.J., anything more you want to add?

STYLES: I'll do the rest of my talking in the ring, where it counts most. □

By Frank Krewda

"ABUSE MY LOVE A THOUSAND TIMES, HOWEVER HARD I TRIED. HEARTBREAKER, YOUR TIME HAS COME, CAN'T TAKE YOUR EVIL WAY"

—Led Zeppelin, "Heartbreaker" (Bonham/Jones/Page/Plant)

FLASHING LIGHTS, SIRENS, and a road hazard sign that says, CAUTION: DANGER AHEAD! That's what every male member of the WWE roster should see in his mind's eye the second he finds himself getting too close to and too familiar with Lita.

However, few men resist the opportunity to associate with Lita if such an opportunity presents itself. Who could blame them? Lita's striking looks, spitfire demeanor, and who knows what "interpersonal" skills she possesses could probably have moved Gandhi to participate in a hardcore match. The men with whom she keeps company get noticed and get big matches.

But the shattered dreams, heartache, and fractured careers she's left in her wake can't be overlooked. Lita is WWE's answer to Typhoid Mary. But instead of disease, she spreads trouble and unrest.

Essa Rios. Matt Hardy. Kane. Gene Snitsky. These men have all suffered as a result of some involvement with Lita. The fate of Edge, who's now been professionally and romantically linked to Lita, remains to be seen. But even he, like all of us, must be wondering if this, *um,* partnership will end in disaster.

"That's the kind of question I'd expect from a loser like Kane," Edge recently told *PWI.* "He knows nothing about women and even less about Lita. But I know how to make her happy, and it's driving Kane up a wall. Hell, he can barely hold back the tears when he sees her."

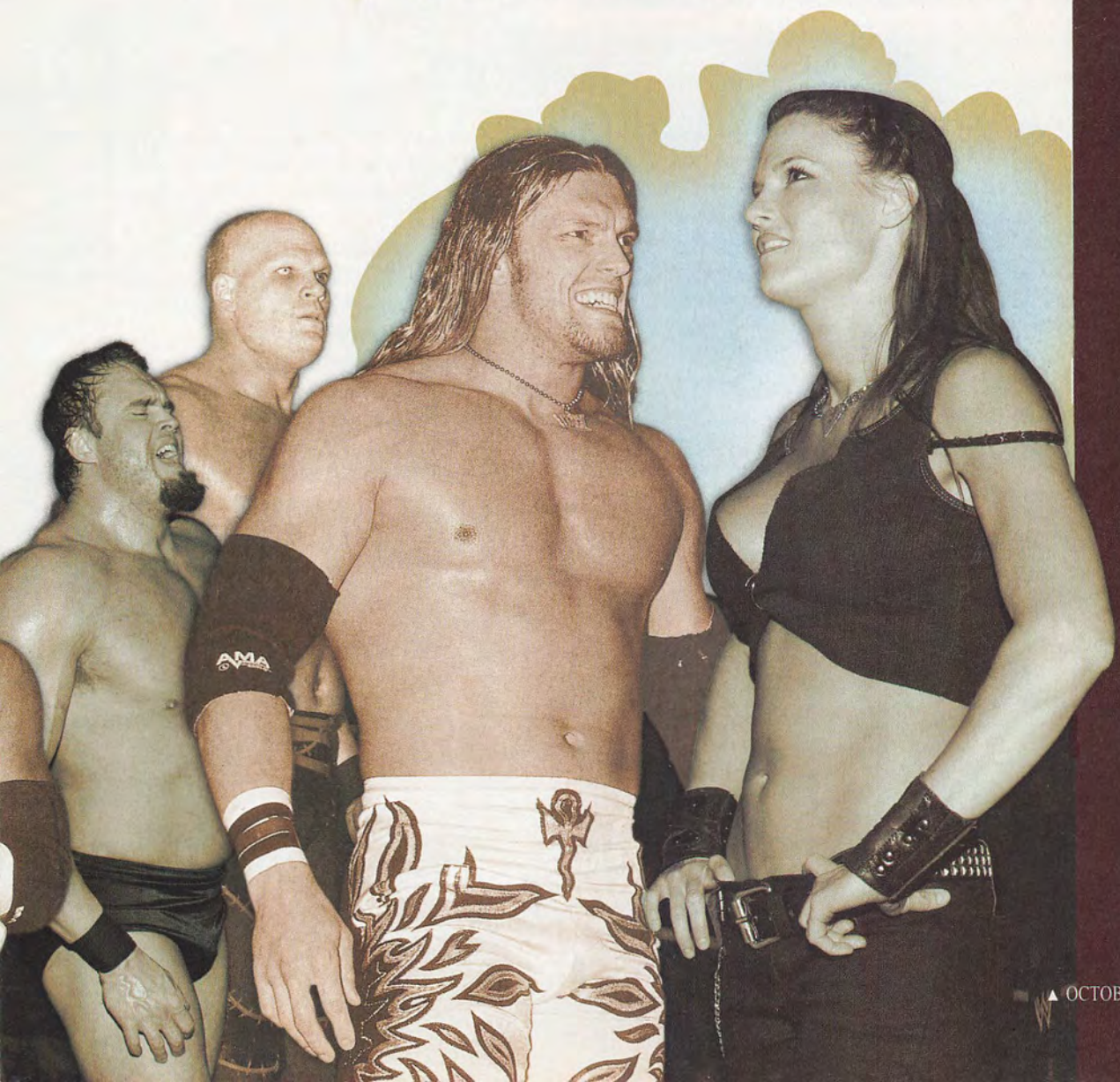
Such cockiness can only come from a person who's chosen not to acquaint himself with recent history. Kane, the very subject of Edge's barbs, is a living reminder of just how treacherous Lita be. Does he really forget how Lita, in WWE's world, strung Kane along for months, only to pit him against Edge at Vengeance as a convenient way to symbolically end her "marriage" to Kane? Apparently he does not—just as he doesn't seem to subscribe to the theory "once a cheater, always a cheater." How can Edge be so sure Lita is not running off behind his back, just as she ran around Kane's back with him?

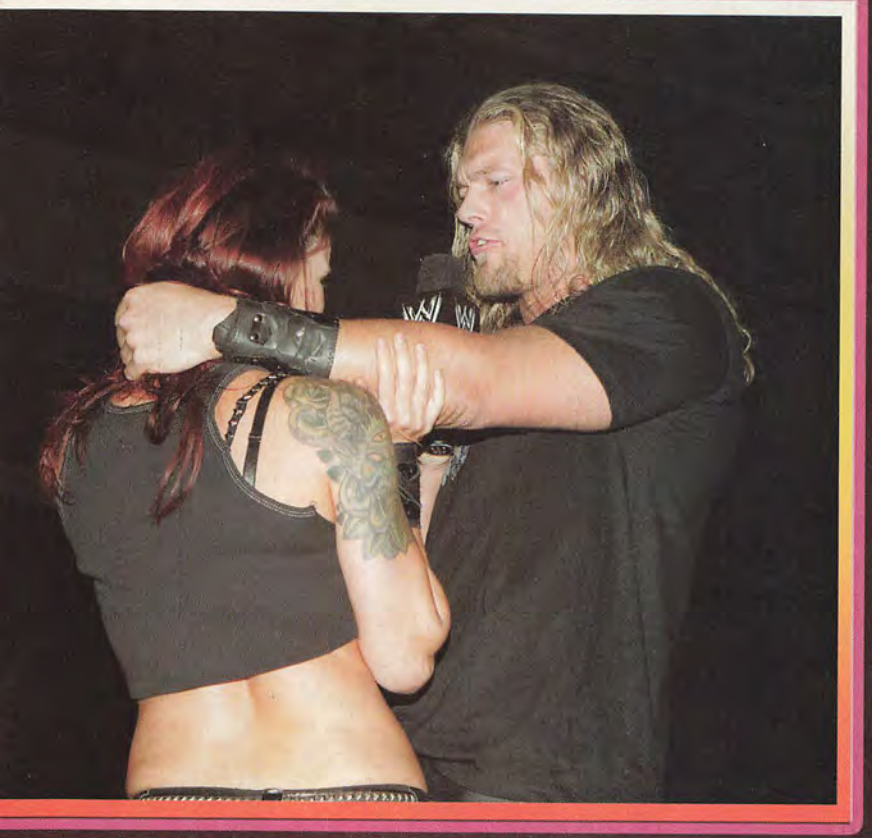
While the look on Kane's face each time Lita and Edge show up on *Raw* to rub it in reveals just how much he's suffering, "The Big Red Machine" got off easy compared to Matt Hardy, who's suffered more than anyone at Lita's hands. For those familiar with the whole story, yes, what is happening to Kane on TV seems to be mirroring what happened to Hardy in the real world.

Hardy learned about the very real life Lita-Edge affair early this year and shared his feelings on his personal Web site. Naturally, the comments were passionate and less than flattering to Lita, the love of his life for many years, and WWE, not thrilled with the fact that Hardy

Whole Lita Love

How Many Men Can One Woman Ruin?





Ah, true love. Or is this just true lust? Edge thinks he has found his dream woman in Lita. He's not the first man to think that.

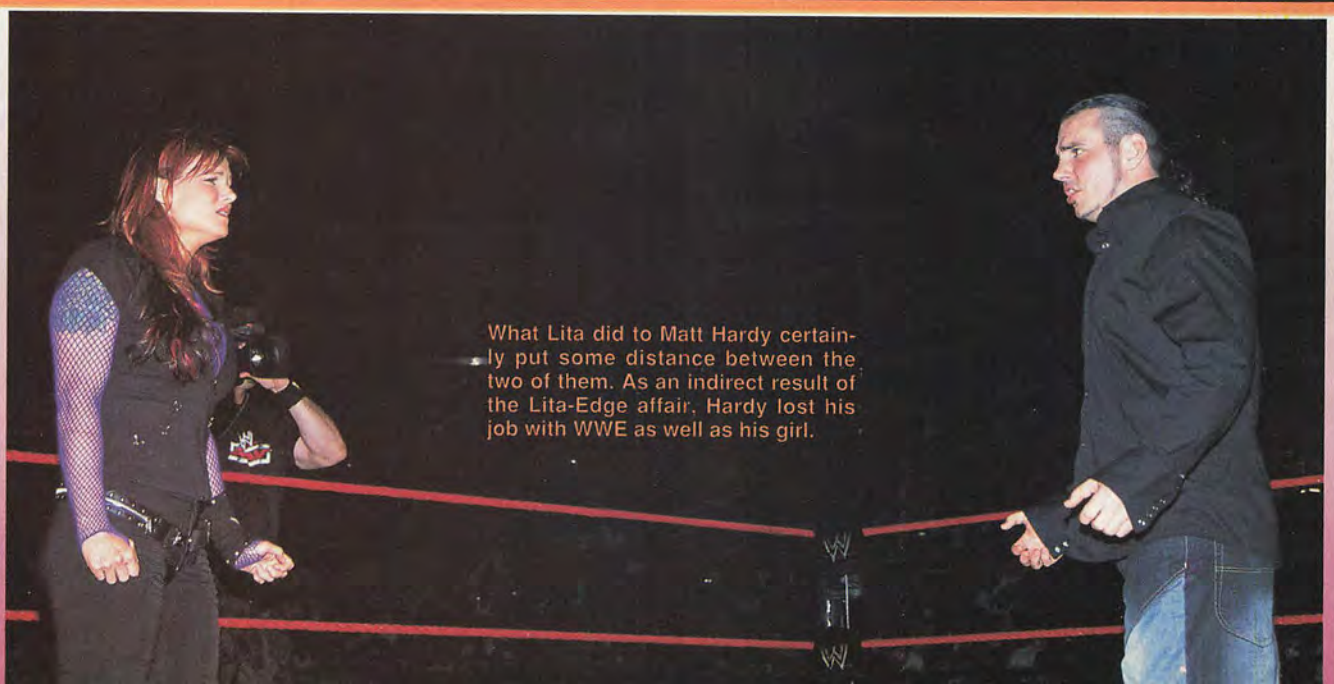
"ESSA RIOS. MATT HARDY. KANE. GENE SNITSKY. THESE MEN HAVE ALL SUFFERED AS A RESULT OF SOME INVOLVEMENT WITH LITA. THE FATE OF EDGE, WHO'S NOW BEEN PROFESSIONALLY AND ROMANTICALLY LINKED TO LITA, REMAINS TO BE SEEN. BUT EVEN HE, LIKE ALL OF US, MUST BE WONDERING IF THIS, *UM,* PARTNERSHIP WILL END IN DISASTER."

chose to go public with the problems he was having in his private life, subsequently sent Matt packing. Talk about a triple threat! Matt lost his girl, his job, and a friend at virtually the same time.

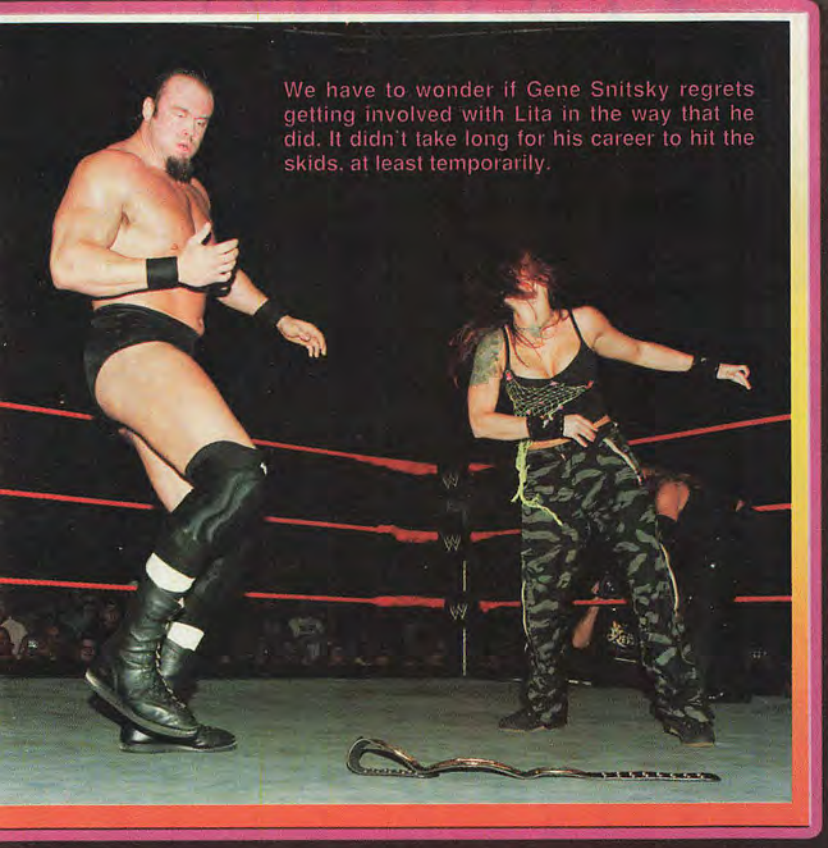
But you'd be mistaken if you think the victims this black widow lures into her web must be romantically linked to her. She can be just as lethal to the careers of men on the other side of the equation. Case in point: Snitsky.

No question, Snitsky targeted Lita (and Kane) in order to establish himself quickly in WWE. He caused Lita to miscarry Kane's baby, and then tormented Lita while Kane recovered from injuries Snitsky himself delivered. Fast-forward a few months. Snitsky took some hellacious beatings from the returning Kane and then found himself on the injured reserve list. Today's he's looking to recover whatever momentum he had prior to being injured. Is that just bad luck on Snitsky's part—or that dreaded Lita jinx working its black magic?

It's a jinx Lita herself has had difficulty shaking over the past few years. Take just one look at the misfortunes that have befallen her and it becomes easy to understanding why anyone—man or



What Lita did to Matt Hardy certainly put some distance between the two of them. As an indirect result of the Lita-Edge affair, Hardy lost his job with WWE as well as his girl.



We have to wonder if Gene Snitsky regrets getting involved with Lita in the way that he did. It didn't take long for his career to hit the skids, at least temporarily.

woman—might want to keep some distance from her: neck surgery, a forced wedding, a miscarriage, daily torment from a bully (Snitsky), daily torment from a co-worker (Trish Stratus), a debilitating knee injury, and bad publicity from her role in an illicit affair.

"You know, I used to call her the kiss of death just to get under her skin," Stratus told *PWI.* "But when you look at all the bad things that happened to her and the people she surrounds herself with, now I can't help but wonder if there's something to what I said, maybe more than I thought originally."

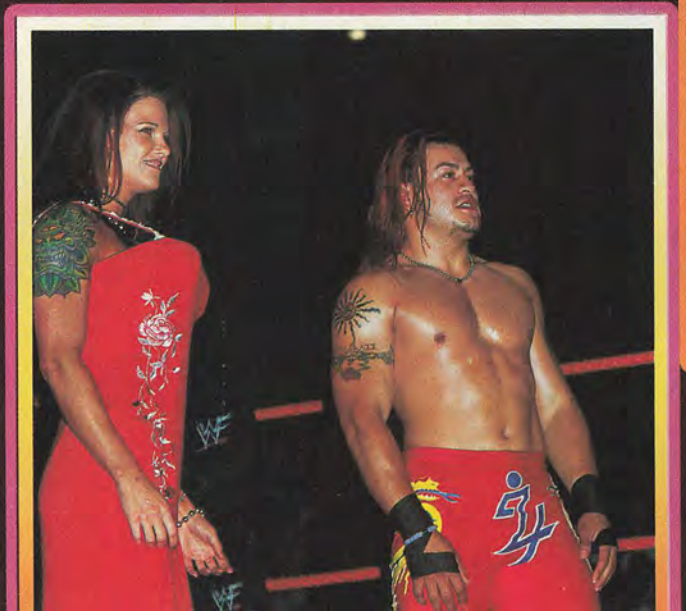
Actually, Trish would hardly be the first to wonder. Going back to her earliest days in WWE, when Lita served as the valet for Essa Rios, evidence of a black cloud began to emerge. Rios was set for a relatively big push among WWE's light heavyweights when he was paired with Lita. But the partnership imploded within a few months, and Rios soon disappeared from the roster altogether. Meanwhile, Lita went on to align herself with Matt and Jeff Hardy during their championship years. But that success was fleeting, as Jeff was eventually given his release.

Make no mistake, Lita has seen some good times, too. She is a two-time former WWE women's champ and she appears to be happier making out with Edge every Monday night (much to Kane's chagrin) than she was hiding from Snitsky and Kane each week.

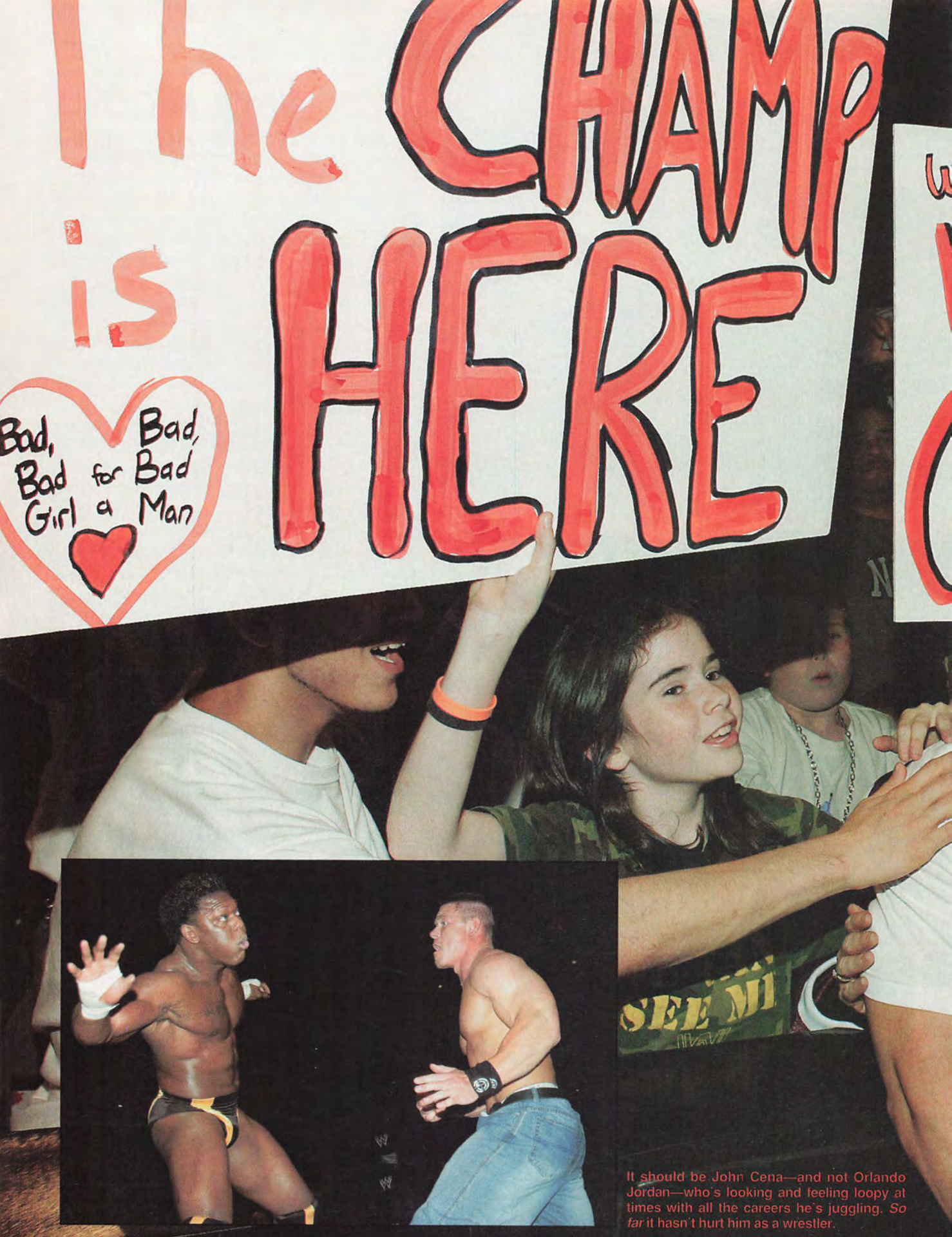
Christian, who's one of the few males on the WWE roster to have crossed paths with Lita and not gotten badly burned, considers himself lucky. "I went along with Jericho when we were trying to hook up with Lita and Trish. But now I look back on how much trouble that would have been and thank goodness it never worked out."

His buddy Edge should only be so lucky. □

Essa Rios was the first man with whom Lita partnered in WWE. Remember him? Has anyone north of Mexico seen him recently?



Edge still thinks he can win the WWE Raw title from Batista. But do you think he might occasionally lay awake at night wondering if he'll be feeling Kane's pain soon?



It should be John Cena—and not Orlando Jordan—who's looking and feeling loopy at times with all the careers he's juggling. *So far* it hasn't hurt him as a wrestler.

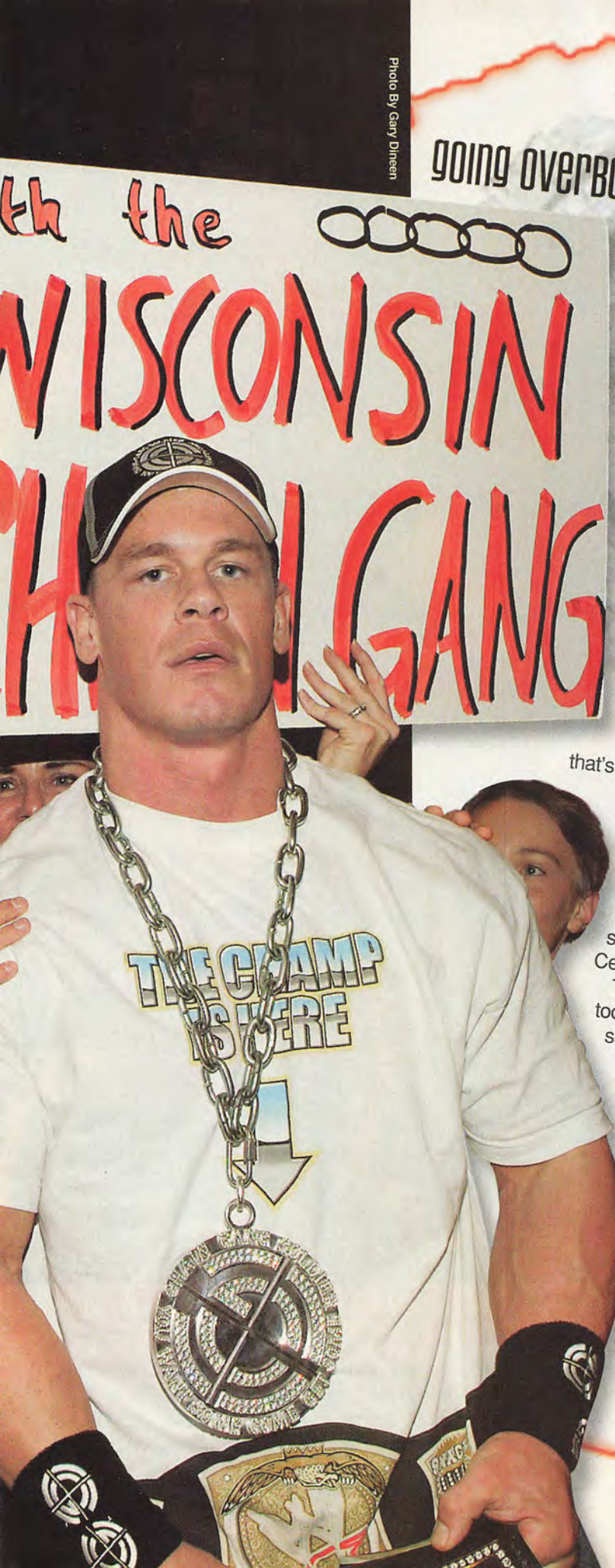


Photo By Gary Dineen

going overboard outside the ropes: IS JOHN CENA shortchanging HIMSELF?

By Bill Meltzer

ONE TRUISM HAS never changed in the long history of pro wrestling. The champion is a target. It was true in the days of Lou Thesz, it was true for Bruno Sammartino, and it's true now for John Cena. That's why as hard as it is to win the belt, it *is* even harder to stay on top. And that's true even if wrestling is all you do.

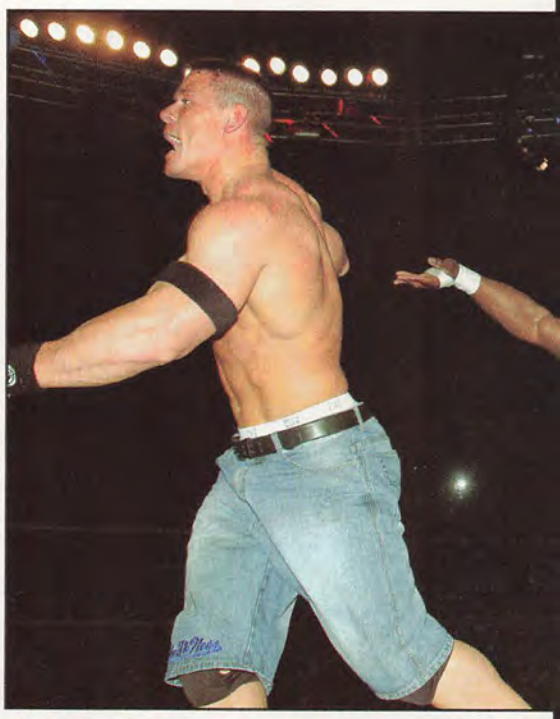
The pressure is huge. Everybody wants a piece of the champ. Some of those champs have demands on them both inside and outside of the ring. Cena is an ambitious guy who wants to be wrestling's next crossover star, a la The Rock. And since we all know how valuable those crossover stars can be, WWE is throwing its weight behind Cena's attempt to cross over into the mainstream.

That's a lot of weight to be throwing around. Maybe too much weight for even the 6'3", 260-pound Cena to support … whether he wants to admit it or not.

You might not know that Cena shot the movie *The Marine* for WWE Films last year in Australia. He had the lead role, actually. The film has wrapped up shooting and is currently in post-production. (It remains to be seen if it will be released in theaters or go directly to video.)

You might have also heard something about Cena's rap career. That's taking up a lot of his time, too. He's enjoying some success sales-wise with his debut CD, *You Can't See Me*. The CD is requiring him to do a lot of publicity tours, which eats into the time he can devote to wrestling.

Photos By George Napolitano



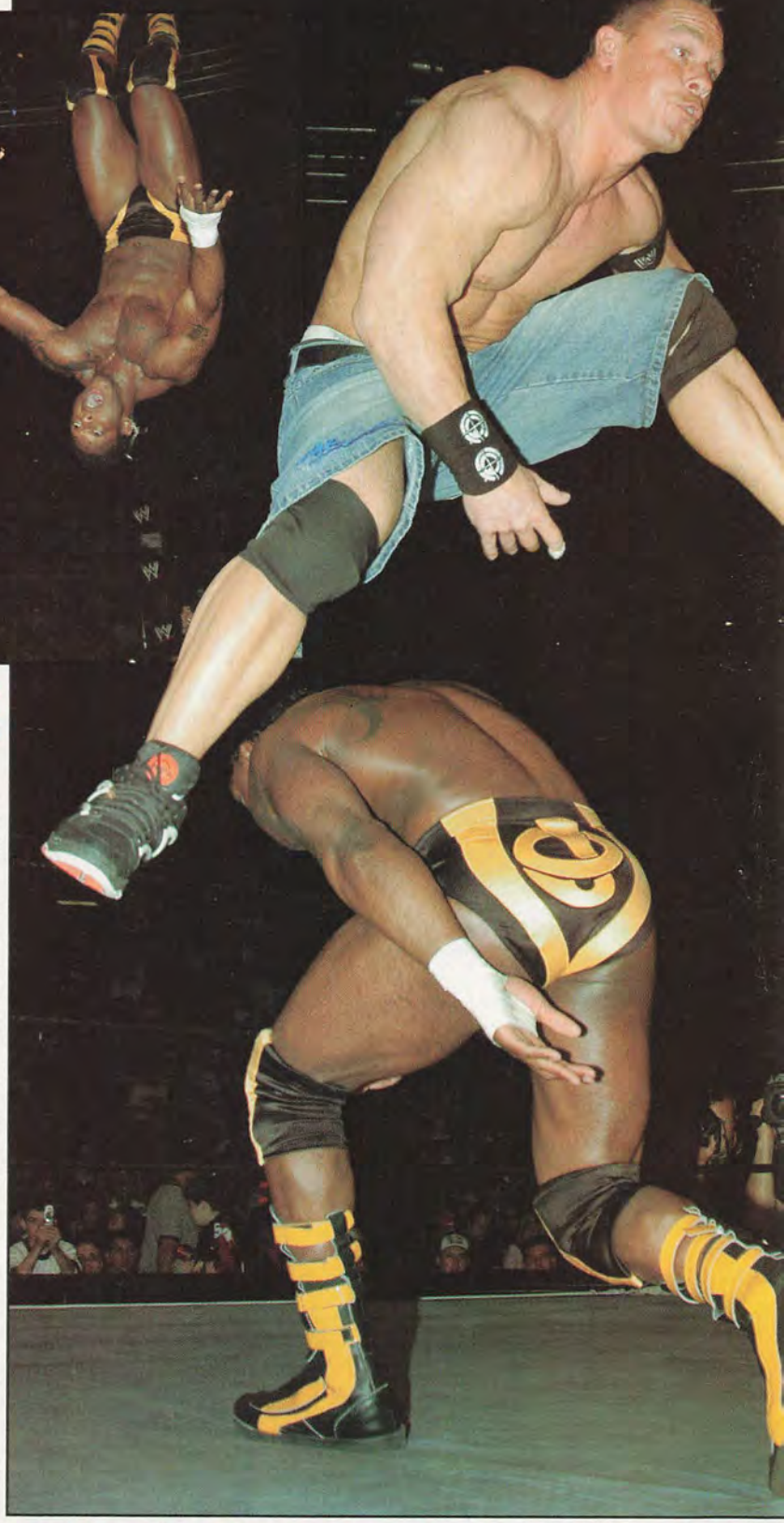
Cena passed his first big test as champ after winning the Smackdown belt from JBL. He took all that JBL (and Jordan and the rest of the Cabinet) threw at him in rematches and emerged looking stronger.

All the while, potential challengers lie in wait, hoping for the chance to catch Cena with his attention divided and make off with his belt.

"You know that old saying, strong as an ox and twice as smart? Well, that's Cena," said former Smackdown champ John Bradshaw Layfield. "He's spreading himself too thin, and I'd like nothing better than to spread his carcass a little thinner. I didn't hold that belt for ... well, let's be honest, practically forever because of dumb luck. It's just a matter of time until the belt's around the waist of an honorable champion, and he's on one of them reality shows, sharing a bunk bed with Vanilla Ice."

Of course, it's only to be expected that Layfield would diss Cena. But JBL does make an important point. Cena debuted as a pro wrestler just four years ago. In a sport in which even many of the all-time greats paid their dues for a decade before finally reaching the top, Cena is still relatively inexperienced.

For all of his strength, natural athleticism, and charisma, Cena is still learning his craft as a wrestler. In many ways, Cena today is the in-ring equivalent of Kerry Von Erich at the time Kerry won the NWA World title from Ric Flair in 1984. Both had boundless potential, but were rough around the edges as wrestlers. While Cena's reign has already surpassed Von Erich's short, disastrous reign, Von Erich can serve as a cautionary tale for Cena. Too much too soon often leads to quick burnout.

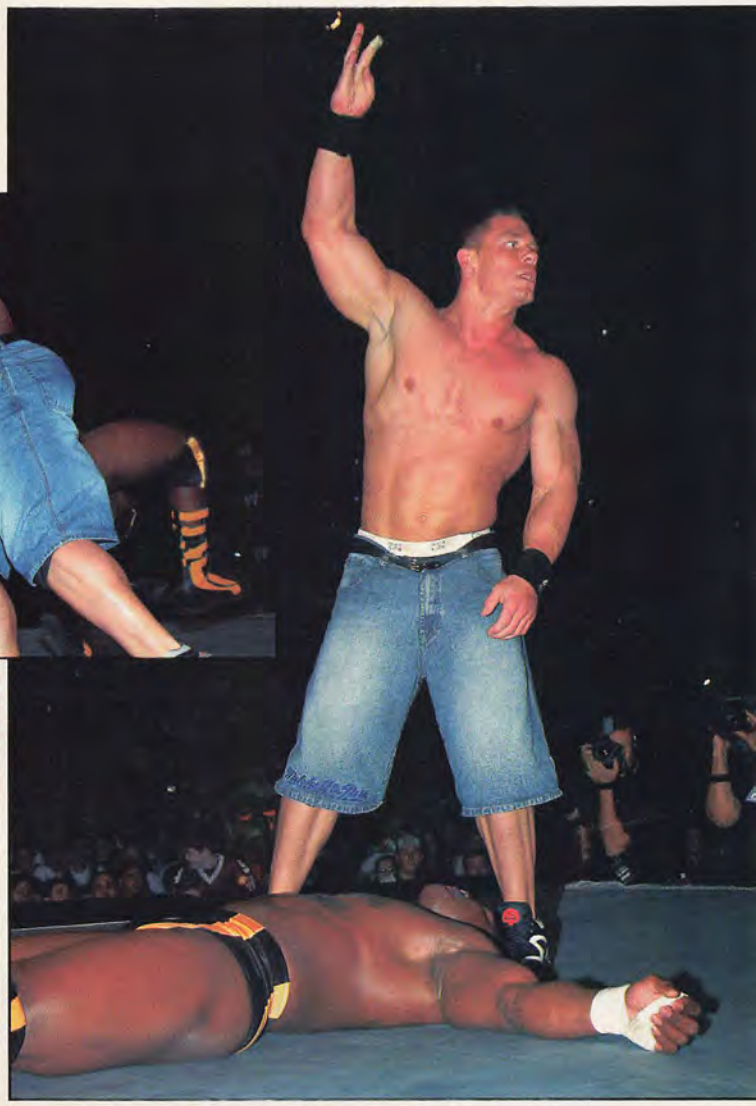


It must be tempting for Cena to leap into any outside venture that appeals to him. He's hot, he's marketable, and he has a lot of different skills. He just needs to be very careful about pacing himself.

Cena couldn't possibly fit more on his already-overflowing plate. He's taken on a full WWE schedule, wrestling and cutting promos at house shows and TV tapings, in addition to trying to advance his other careers.

Something's gotta give. Something like training and prep time for matches.

"John definitely has a crazy schedule," agreed fellow WWE fan favorite Rey Misterio Jr., a 14-year veteran. "But he's got the drive to do it and he's a hard worker besides being a tough guy. Yeah, the schedule can wear you down, but it can also go the other way and keep you more focused. It can force you to be more focused."



It's not meant to be a knock against Cena, but he's a better showman (right) than wrestler (above) right now. He could use a little extra time to strategize, train, and spar in the ring.

Even so, it's virtually impossible to be at your best every night even when you aren't distracted or tired, and Cena is attempting to branch out beyond wrestling very early in his career. Even The Rock didn't become a crossover star until he was further along in his wrestling career. In fact, he nearly burned out when he was pushed too hard too quickly as just a wrestler. But he recovered from that, and by the time his film career was taking off, The Rock was ready for the massive demands that came along with juggling two careers.

Another key difference: Rock was helped out by the fact his rise coincided with the heyday of the "Attitude" era. Of course, Rock helped to define that era, but he was surrounded by other charismatic wrestlers who could pick up the slack when he had commitments beyond wrestling.

Today, WWE is counting on Cena to carry the company into the next boom period—not just defend his title. Amazingly, the 28-year-old champion seems to be relishing the challenge so far. At Judgment Day, he left a convincing calling card that he's not about to relinquish his spot anytime soon. At the conclusion of one of the goriest, most vicious matches of the year, it was Layfield, not Cena, who was forced to quit.

The performance made the wrestling world take notice. And it's only painted the bull's-eye that much more prominently on Cena.

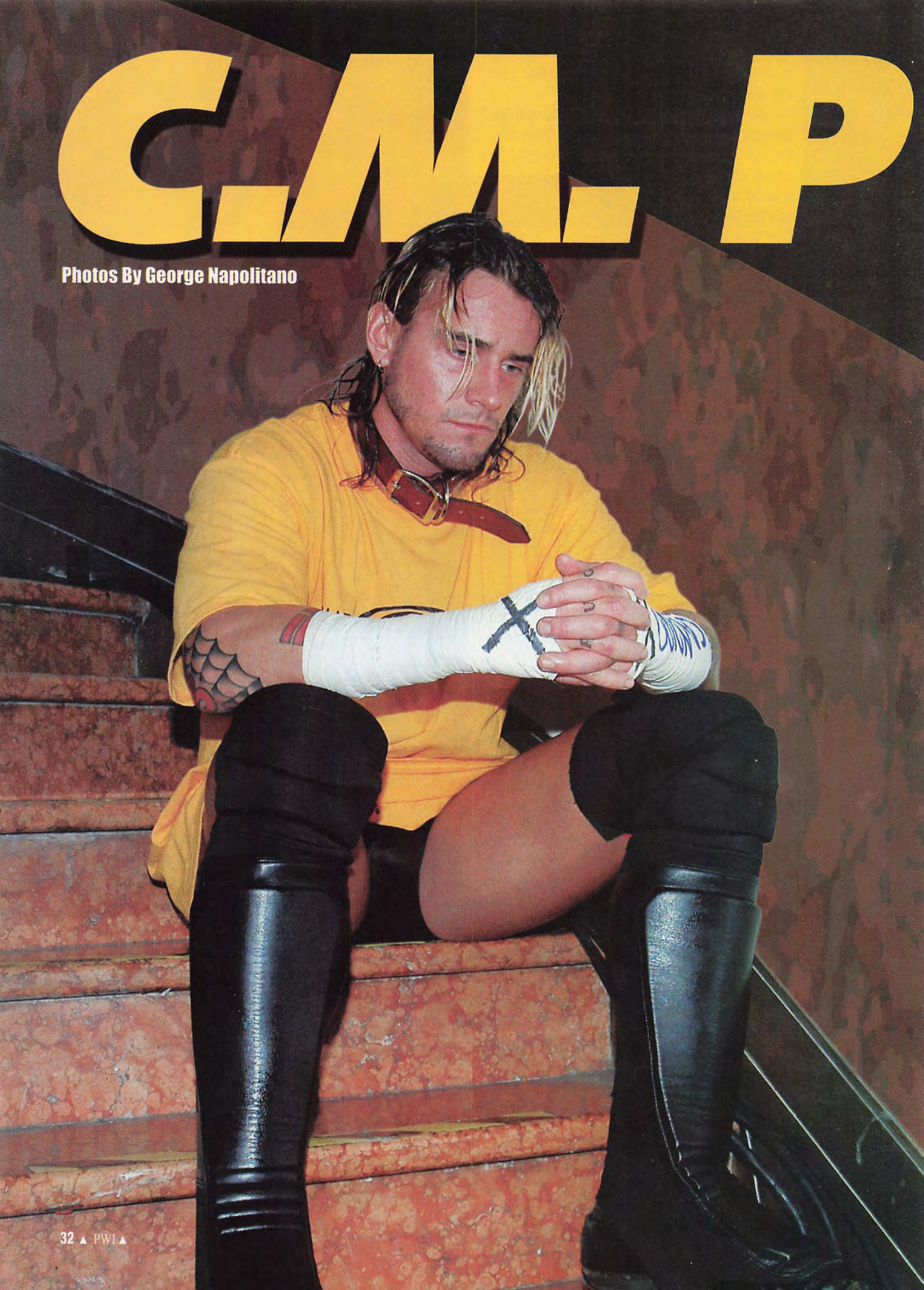
Said Shawn Michaels: "I gotta take my hat off to Cena. He's making this all look a lot easier than it really is. I got my hands full right now with Kurt Angle. But once I'm done with him, maybe things will work out and me and Cena can get it on."

Such is life as a champion. Lots of adulation, lots of pressure, lots of people gunning for you—and ultimately no one to rely on but yourself. We'll find out soon if John Cena can continue his push to be a mainstream celebrity without getting picked off by one of the myriad wrestlers just watching and waiting to catch him at a weak moment. Maybe we'll discover he's a lot stronger than any of us realizes. □

Cena couldn't possibly fit more on his already-overflowing plate. He's taken on a full WWE schedule, wrestling and cutting promos at house shows and TV tapings, in addition to trying to advance his other careers. Something's gotta give. Something like training and prep time for matches.

C.M. P

Photos By George Napolitano



PUNK'S TRIBUTE TO CHRIS CANDIDO

"No Amount Of Blood Was Going To Stop Me Tonight"

By Dan Murphy

C.M. PUNK'S FIRST singles match with Chris Candido was supposed to take place during the first week of January 2005 for IWA Mid-South. Both Punk and Candido had been looking forward to that bout. They had squared off several times before in tag team and three-way matches and were eager to step into the ring for a one-on-one showdown. For Candido, it was to be another step back in a long personal comeback after his career was nearly derailed by drug abuse and other personal demons, a match against a fellow student of the game who was making a name for himself by wrestling intense one-hour contests. For Punk, it was a chance to face a wrestler he grew up watching and admiring—all the way back to Candido's days in Jim Cornette's Smoky Mountain Wrestling more than a decade ago. For both men, it was something of a dream match. Each saw a little of himself in the other.

But the match never happened. For a variety of reasons, that one-on-one encounter had to be rescheduled four times. It had finally been set—they thought—for May 6, but then it had to be postponed once again when Candido suffered a broken leg at TNA's Lockdown pay-per-view on April 24.

"I talked to Chris on the phone in the hospital after he broke his leg, and he was still talking about going through with the match," Punk said. "I told him to get his rest and heal up, and that there was plenty of time to have our singles match."

Candido's sudden death stunned the wrestling community. He died on April 28 from a blood clot following complications from surgery on the leg, eight days before that scheduled singles match with Punk. Candido's passing weighed heavily on Punk's mind on May 7, as he prepared to face Jimmy Rave in a dog-collar match for Ring of Honor.

While Punk's desire to wrestle Candido stemmed from deep-seated respect, the roots of his match against Rave were steeped in revenge and hatred. The last time they had clashed, Rave had humiliated Punk in his hometown of Chicago, blinding him with bug spray, wrapping a chain around his neck, and

Jimmy Rave got C.M. Punk's flowing (out of his head) and flowing during their ROH dog-collar match in New York City in May. But he wasn't going to make Punk quit. This match meant too much to him.

hanging him over the ring ropes. Punk had demanded the dog-collar match to ensure Rave couldn't run and hide behind two other members of The Embassy, Prince Nana and Fast Eddie.

The match was held in the Grand Ballroom of Manhattan's New Yorker Hotel—ROH's grand debut in the Big Apple—and the card opened with a somber 10-bell salute to Candido. When it was time for the dog-collar match, Punk emerged from the locker room wearing a Candido T-shirt and flashed Candido's old ECW Triple Threat hand signal on his way to the ring.

Rave and Nana tried to pull a bait-and-switch, as Rave feigned a stomach illness and tried to get Punk to agree to face Mike Kruel as a substitute, but Punk saw through the diversion and caught Rave as he attempted to sneak-attack the Second City Saint. Punk and Rave tumbled to the floor, with Punk brutalizing Rave with the chain all over the ringside area. But Rave turned the match in his favor by using the chain to pull Punk face-first into a steel cornerpost, opening a horrific gash on Punk's forehead. Within minutes, blood was pouring down Punk's face, turning his blond hair a sickening shade of crimson.

"I was bleeding like a pig," Punk said as he received medical attention in the locker room after the match. "It was sort of surreal. I remember laughing at one point because there was just blood everywhere. I had never seen so much blood, and it was my own."

In spite of all the brutal punishment he took and all the blood he lost, Punk kept coming back against Rave. Although he ultimately lost, he felt very good about the effort—and about the man to whom he was dedicating the bout.

But even in the midst of the carnage, Punk couldn't get Candido out of his mind.

"I wanted to dedicate that match to Chris, and no amount of blood was going to stop me tonight. No matter what happened, I wanted the match to go on, and it did."

Punk endured a savage beating from Rave and somehow managed to come back, flooring Rave with a pair of stiff power bombs onto the chain. Sensing defeat, Prince Nana ordered The Em-

Rave was about as sadistic and bloodthirsty as anyone had ever seen when he wrestled Punk (right and far right). Plus he had the odds working in his favor. Punk, however, felt like he had someone watching out for him, too.

“Somehow, Punk struggled to his feet and acknowledged the crowd through a veil of blood, earning a standing ovation from the ROH faithful. Some fans were saying Punk's performance was reminiscent of Mick Foley, a comparison Punk would respectfully accept. But on this particular night, he was honoring another hardcore hero who was even closer to his heart.”

It was difficult for some fans to watch as Rave continued to carve up Punk. Strangely enough, Punk wasn't fazed by the sight of so much of his own blood. He expected it.

bassy into the ring, but Punk battled back valiantly. Unfortunately, the numbers game proved to be too much for Punk, who had lost pints of plasma and was reeling on legs that must have felt like angel hair pasta.

Rave took full advantage of the interference and the no-DQ rules of the dog-collar match by grabbing a chair and smashing it into Punk's skull with a nauseating thud. Several times, Rave brought the steel chair crashing into Punk's head as he slumped helplessly on the mat. Finally, Rave made the cover and scored the win. Incredibly, The Embassy tried to attack Punk more after the match, only to be run off by a contingent of ROH fan favorites led by Punk's tag team partner, Colt Cabana.

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Somewhere, Chris Candido was smiling down on him. □

Rave continued to attack Punk after the match ... until reinforcements arrived. The 800 or so fans on hand saw something very gory that night, but they saw something pretty special, too.

The Lies People Tell

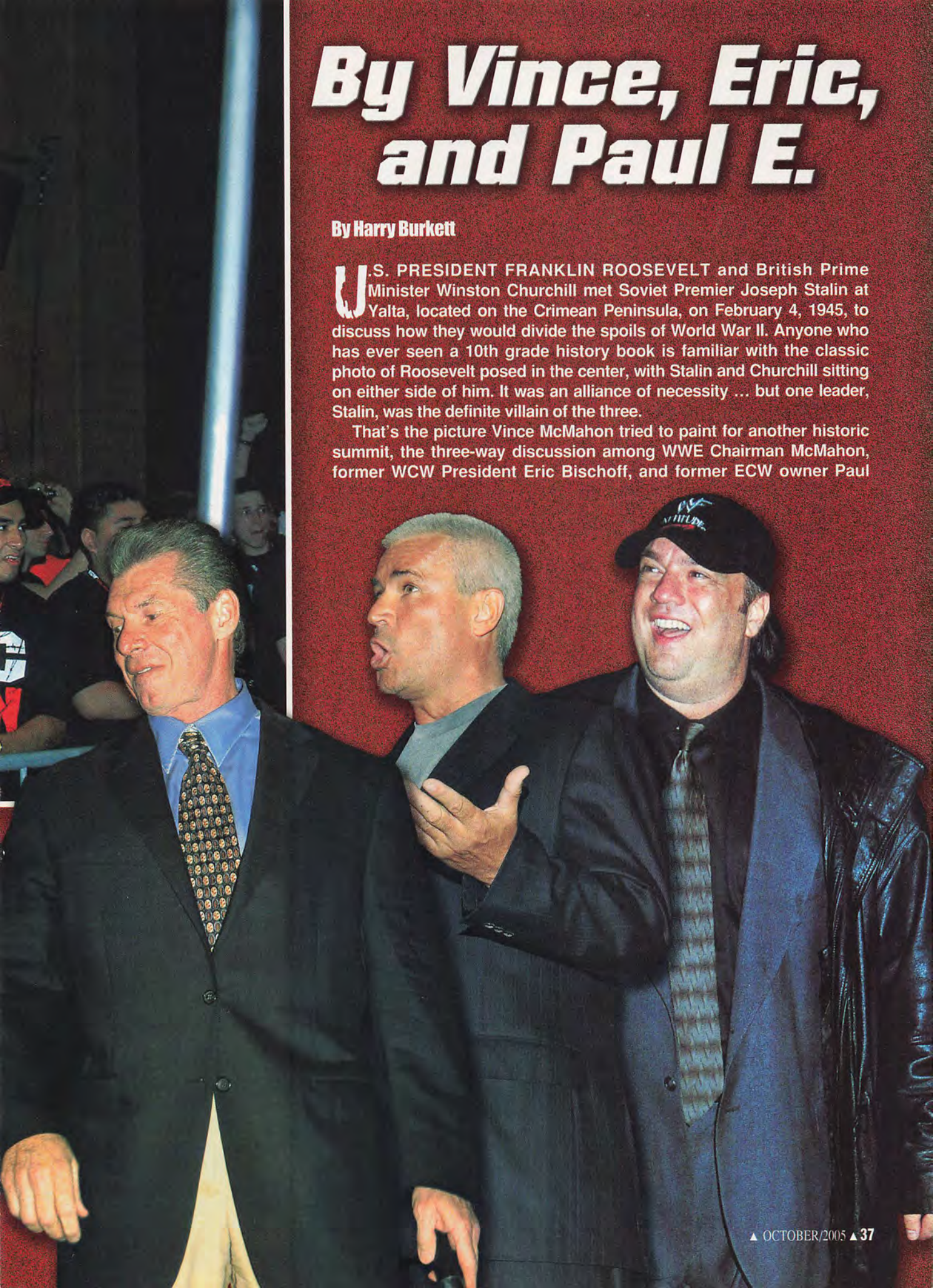
REVISIONIST HISTORY

By Vince, Eric, and Paul E.

By Harry Burkett

U.S. PRESIDENT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin at Yalta, located on the Crimean Peninsula, on February 4, 1945, to discuss how they would divide the spoils of World War II. Anyone who has ever seen a 10th grade history book is familiar with the classic photo of Roosevelt posed in the center, with Stalin and Churchill sitting on either side of him. It was an alliance of necessity ... but one leader, Stalin, was the definite villain of the three.

That's the picture Vince McMahon tried to paint for another historic summit, the three-way discussion among WWE Chairman McMahon, former WCW President Eric Bischoff, and former ECW owner Paul



Sure, Eric Bischoff and WCW dealt ECW a major blow when they offered Eddie Guerrero and Chris Benoit (above) contracts they just couldn't refuse. But wasn't it also a big blow to ECW when Vince McMahon signed Buh Buh Ray Dudley (right) and half-brother D-Von?

Heyman on the May 23 edition of *Raw*. Incensed that ECW was running commercials for its reunion pay-per-view, One Night Stand, during *Raw*, Bischoff was about to hold a mock funeral for the Extreme promotion inside the ring. McMahon interrupted the ceremony, however, and announced he was financially backing One Night Stand, just as he had secretly funded ECW in the late-1990s. The WWE chairman then introduced Heyman, who corroborated his story.

According to Vinnie Mac and Paul E., McMahon was a kindly benefactor who supported ECW through tough times, while Bischoff aimed to destroy the promotion out of sheer greed. They did their best to make Eugene's Uncle Eric look like the villain FDR sarcastically called "Uncle Joe."

Like the charming, smooth-talking Roosevelt, whose steady leadership made America the planet's leading superpower as a result of World War II, McMahon made WWE the undisputed major league of pro wrestling as a result of the Monday night war. And, as Roosevelt found a loyal junior partner in Churchill in his game of political chess against Stalin, McMahon has found a similar ally in Heyman in his efforts to make Bischoff the all-time boogeyman of pro wrestling.

Sure, WCW did implode like the Soviet Union. But was Bischoff really responsible for destroying ECW? Or was it in some (large?) part Heyman's creative burnout and financial mismanagement? Did McMahon have ulterior motives when he funneled cash to ECW to help keep it alive? And didn't McMahon do a little talent raiding of his own during ECW's heyday?

Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin left Yalta, returned to their home countries, and no doubt put the best possible spin on their respective deals. The U.S. and U.K., and the Soviet Union to a greater extent, were guilty of some revisionist history since the controversial summit that divided Europe for more than 40 years.

WWE is engaging in the same kind of revisionist history. "There's an old saying that the victors get to write the history books," noted Thomas Pilliard, a long-time WWE analyst for *PWI*. "That has definitely been true in WWE's depiction of its rivalry with WCW, and now we're seeing how ECW fits into McMahon's version of events. ECW, though, is only a pawn in McMahon's overall mission to dismiss the Ted Turner-owned WCW as merely a Southern rasslin' company that used a billionaire's money to steal WWE talent."

In the new history, Bischoff is depicted as having been greedy, ruthless, and arrogant during the Monday night war. Actually, that may be an accurate description of Bischoff. But are McMahon and Heyman suggesting they weren't greedy, ruthless, and arrogant? McMahon and Heyman weren't the angels they claim to have been. Bischoff wasn't the devil they're trying to portray, either.

When evaluating McMahon's revisionist history, especially the storyline leading into One Night Stand, here are five key points to consider:

•WWE raided much of ECW's talent. WCW certainly recruited more ECW wrestlers, including Public Enemy, Raven, The Sandman (Hak), Perry Saturn, and Mikey Whipwreck. Prior to that, it took Dean Malenko, Eddie Guerrero, and Chris Benoit. Yet

> "Bischoff is depicted as having been greedy, ruthless, and arrogant during the Monday night war. Actually, that may be an accurate description of Bischoff. But are McMahon and Heyman suggesting they weren't greedy, ruthless, and arrogant? McMahon and Heyman weren't the angels they claim to have been. Bischoff wasn't the devil they're trying to portray, either."

WWE signed stars such as Tazz and The Dudley Boyz. To his credit, McMahon did allow Tazz to return to ECW to beat Mike Awesome for the promotion's World title just after Awesome jumped to WCW. But if McMahon had all of Ted Turner's billions, wouldn't he have raided even more talent?

•WWE co-opted many ECW concepts. WCW may have swiped ECW talent, but WWE might have done something worse by stealing its identity. The hardcore championship, three-way dances, and the featuring of women in very little clothing were all inspired by ECW. WCW was winning the Monday night war so handily in 1997 that McMahon allowed ECW wrestlers to invade WWE. He even made an attempt to sign Rob Van Dam, ECW's hottest star at the time. Heck, you could even make a case that the entire "Attitude" era was inspired by ECW.

•WWE didn't make ECW a developmental territory. During the May 23 *Raw* summit, McMahon claimed to have had the far-sighted vision that ECW would produce WWE's superstars of the future. Mick Foley, Steve Austin, and Rey Misterio Jr. were among those mentioned, but none of them remained in ECW for a long period. Foley and Austin had long runs in WCW before getting to ECW, so they were hardly hot, *young* prospects. And Misterio didn't join WWE until one year after his long WCW run ended amid the company's implosion. Instead of pouring money into WWE's now-forgotten developmental operation in Memphis, McMahon could have invested the money in ECW to make it an official farm club.

•WWE's financial assistance to ECW was substantial, but not a firm commitment. McMahon accuses Bischoff of raiding ECW with no conscience, and never reimbursing Heyman for creating stars for WCW. During the late-'90s, McMahon did pay Heyman, perhaps in part as a courtesy for funneling stars to WWE. Reportedly, McMahon gave approximately $500,000 to ECW during this period. That's a rather paltry sum, though, considering WWE was worth nearly a billion dollars in 1999.

•WWE destroyed ECW. To be accurate, Heyman was responsible for ECW's bankruptcy in 2001. Although Heyman did a phenomenal job of taking a tiny independent promotion and making it one of the Big Three, he readily admits he wasn't much of a businessman. But when WWE purchased ECW's trademarks, it could have restarted the brand, possibly on Spike TV. Instead, McMahon simply tossed the ECW World heavyweight, World tag team, and TV title belts onto the ashbin of history. And he ruined what was left of ECW and WCW in a badly implemented invasion storyline.

Yes, McMahon deserves credit for resurrecting ECW. But he contributed his share to its burial in the first place. □

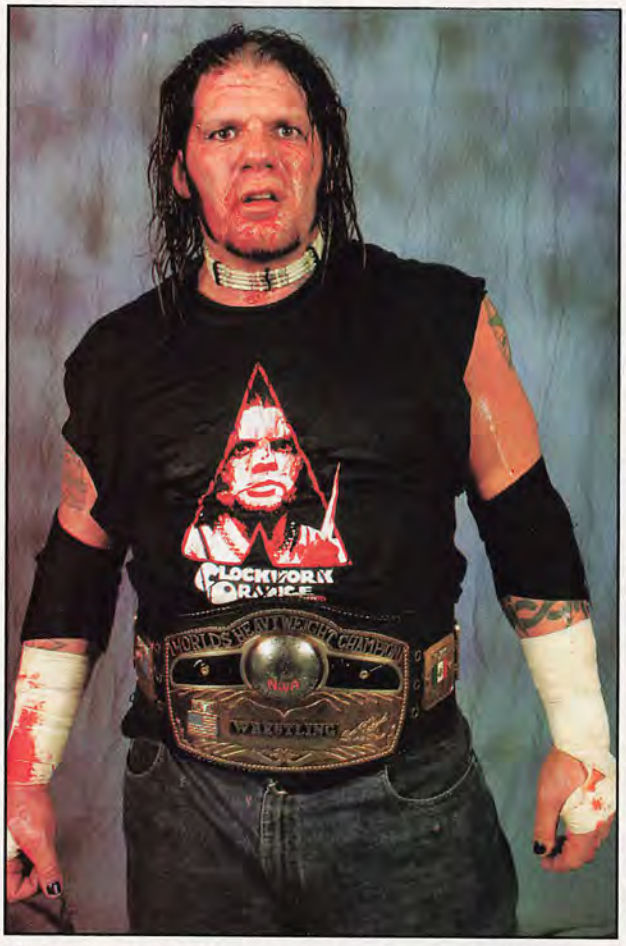
Before ECW became all the rage in wrestling, did we see many WWE wrestlers going through tables? Nope. It would be hard for anyone to dispute the notion that WWE stole a lot of concepts from ECW during the "Attitude" era.

the business page

By Harry Burkett

TNA close to major cable deal? Just when it seems the wrestling media is ready to write TNA's obituary (again), the promotion finds another way to stay alive—and, suddenly, its future looks brighter than it has in a while. No, TNA isn't jumping to the Chicago-based WGN. Believe it or not, TNA's long shot—a deal with Spike TV—looks like it has a pretty good chance of happening.

As TNA negotiated with Fox Sports Net to renew its one-year contract in May, FSN executives—who at one time were very delighted with *Impact's* ratings—were surprisingly cool to extend the deal more than six months. That was quite a letdown, especially considering that TNA pays for its air time! At that point, TNA began negotiations with WGN, which had nearly become the home of *Impact* before last year's FSN deal. Critics suggested that WGN was an even less desirable outlet than Fox Sports Net and, when negotiations with the Chicago-based superstation fizzled in early-June, TNA's situation appeared quite grim.



It's looking more and more like TNA has a decent chance of winding up on Spike TV this fall. Even the morose Raven, who captured the NWA title at Slammiversary in June, might smile if that deal got done.

Meanwhile, TNA's prospects with Spike TV didn't look much better. Minority co-owner Jeff Jarrett had even met with Spike TV executives in New York City, but all indications were that they believed a risky wrestling venture wasn't worth the hassle after losing a proven franchise like WWE. They clearly weren't interesting in a repeat of the Monday night war against WWE on the USA Network this fall, but in mid-June, *Multichannel News* reported that Spike TV might be willing to give TNA a one-hour time slot on late Saturday nights, following *The Ultimate Fighter.*

Until TNA actually gets a television show on a major cable outlet, its pay-per-views will continue to be by far its most visible stage. With Raven capturing the NWA heavyweight title in a five-way "King Of The Mountain" match at TNA's Slammiversary PPV on June 19, critics are wondering about TNA's creative direction as it heads toward a possible Spike TV time slot. After all, A.J. Styles' third reign lasted only a month before Raven won the gold. Will Styles enter the fall season as a hungry hunter or a respectable champion? Heck, will Vince Russo make a grand reappearance just as TNA hits the big time?

Two ROH stars sign with rival companies ... If TNA is fortunate enough to gain the Spike TV time slot, Samoa Joe will be a major benefit to its roster. The former Ring of Honor champion briefly negotiated with WWE before he opted to join TNA in June. Ultimately, Samoa Joe decided TNA would offer a more flexible schedule that would allow him to work for Ring of Honor and New Japan's dojo in Los Angeles.

Samoa Joe made his TNA debut at Slammiversary in an exciting match against Sonjay Dutt. In the end, Joe used his famed muscle buster followed by a rear chokehold to score an important victory to launch his TNA career.

Ring of Honor will not continue to enjoy the services of C.M. Punk, however. Punk impressed WWE talent scouts in dark matches and during appearances on *Sunday Night Heat* and *Velocity,* which led to him signing with the company. Punk went on to wrestle what was billed as his last ROH match on June 18 in Morristown, New Jersey. It was fitting that Punk battled Ring of Honor champ Austin Aries in his final ap-

C.M. Punk was one of two Ring of Honor stars to sign a deal with one of the two big companies in the U.S. this summer. The reigning ROH champ is headed for WWE. Samoa Joe is already in TNA.

pearance, but fans were stunned when Punk pinned Aries for the title. Christopher Daniels made a surprise appearance at that moment and challenged Punk for the belt, but the newly crowned champ (who turned heel after his win) ran out of the arena and jumped into a waiting car. For now, the ROH title situation is up in the air.

The chaos made a statement Punk made earlier in the week seem quite prophetic. "Come say goodbye on Saturday (June 19)," Punk wrote on his Web site. "I promise to go out with a bang. Trust me."

Cena gets "Stone-Cold" praise ...

Steve Austin doesn't mince words when talking about his fellow WWE superstars, so John Cena should be very happy with the former WWF World champion's remarks to Manchester Online, a U.K.-based news Web site. Austin, known for his candid comments, touted John Cena as the future of WWE.

"I don't compare myself to anyone in the business, because I own all the records," said Austin. "John Cena is a person that potentially could break all the records. I'd love to see if he can, and if he does, then it'll just be another high point for the business, so I wish the guy all the luck."

Austin added that the WWE hype machine and Cena's talent would be the two crucial factors in his future success. "He's got the rocket ship on his back, the WWE's pushing him hard, he's got a good head on his shoulders, he's got a good work ethic. He goes out there and gives the people everything he's got. I see no reason why John Cena can't have an extremely successful career."

Since Austin's retirement, no WWE wrestler has come close to grabbing his mantle and becoming a genuine megastar. Could Cena surpass Batista and become that man? It's a strong possibility ... 'cause "Stone-Cold" said so!

WWE Stockwatch

(For the period of May 1 to June 15, 2005)

45-Day High: 10.89 on June 1
45-Day Low: 9.91 on May 4
52-Week High: 13.47 on November 22, 2004
52-Week Low: 9.91 on May 4, 2005

WWE stock is foundering at its lowest levels in more than a year, and that will certainly be a main concern of the company's new chief financial officer, Michael Sileck, a former CFO of Monster Worldwide, the online job placement company. Fortunately, though, former WWE CEO Philip Livingston left Sileck with some strong revenue categories, most notably international touring.

Both Raw and Smackdown toured Europe in April, stopping in the U.K., Italy, Germany, and Ireland, and selling out all 16 live events. During the WrestleMania Revenge tour, the flagship programs of both brands emanated from the NEC Arena in Birmingham, England. WWE also strengthened sponsorship ties with British retail store ASDA, *The Daily Star* newspaper, Woolworth's, Virgin, W.H. Smith, and Eaons Bookstores.

Also, don't think WWE has missed the tremendous success of WrestleReunion and the host of regional legends events throughout North America. WWE plans to feature its former superstars at its own conventions, in addition to launching legends apparel and other forms of merchandising. That means fans can now look forward to seeing their old-time favorites featured more prominently on *Raw* and *Smackdown* as WWE exploits a long-ignored potential revenue stream. Bring on Tito Santana! *Arriba!*

TV breakdown

RAW (Spike TV)

May 16: 4.3
May 23: 3.6
May 30: 3.6
June 6: 3.7
June 13: 4.0

Analysis: Out of nowhere, *Raw* scored a five-week high of 4.3 on May 16, the program's best rating since the night immediately following WrestleMania 21. What was responsible for it? Did Edge suddenly become "Mr. Ratings In The Bank" in his main event match against Kane? Did the interplay among Edge, Kane, and Lita entice viewers? Or was it the vicious lingerie pillow fight between Christy Hemme and Candice Michelle? It's hard to say. For some inexplicable reason, the following week's show plummeted to 3.6, although Vince McMahon, Eric Bischoff, and Paul Heyman debated ECW's future in what was unquestionably a historic segment, and Edge challenged WWE Raw champion Batista in the main event. Likewise, the seemingly unspectacular May 16 show scored better than the first two weeks of the WWE draft on June 6 and 13.

SMACKDOWN (UPN)

May 12: 3.1
May 19: 2.9
May 26: 3.4
June 9: 3.3

Analysis: *Smackdown* slipped into those terrible "2s" on May 19, a bad sign for the Judgment Day pay-per-view three days later. It's possible that some viewers tuned out assuming it would be just more of the same. They were right. WWE Smackdown champion John Cena and John Bradshaw Layfield gave very intense promos for what was expected to be their final major showdown—an "I Quit" match at Judgment Day—and the odds of JBL prevailing were extremely low. As if to demonstrate their weariness of the Cena-Layfield feud and their eagerness for a fresh start on *Smackdown*, viewers watched in much higher numbers the following week. If fans were hoping for a dramatic follow-up to Raw's ECW angle, they were disappointed. ECW wrestlers didn't make a major impact until they crashed the June 9 edition of *Smackdown* just prior to One Night Stand.

VELOCITY (Spike TV)

May 14: 0.6
May 21: 0.5
May 28: 0.5
June 4: 0.5
June 11: 0.6

Analysis: Orlando Jordan solidified his reputation as one of the least-deserving U.S. champions of all-time on *Velocity*. Following non-title losses to John Cena and Booker T on *Smackdown*, Jordan struggled in matches against Hardcore Holly, Mark Jindrak, and Scotty Too Hotty on the brand's secondary program. Meanwhile, announcers Steve Romero and Josh Matthews continue to suffer from "Abbott & Abbott Syndrome," two straight men in desperate need of a comic foil. Ernest Miller, where have you gone?

THE WWE EXPERIENCE (Spike TV)

May 15: 0.5
May 22: 0.6
May 29: 0.5
June 5: 0.5
June 12: 0.5

Analysis: If *Experience* consists mostly of highlights from *Raw* and *Smackdown*, what distinguishes it from the other shows? Behind-the-scenes segments, of course! John Cena discussing his "Bad, Bad Man" video featuring Gary Coleman was very entertaining on the May 15 edition. After being threatened by Kane on that week's Raw, Todd Grisham vowed he would quit WWE if he were forced to interview an angry Batista the following Monday. Fortunately—or unfortunately—for *Experience* viewers, it didn't happen.

SUNDAY NIGHT HEAT (Spike TV)

May 15: 0.8
May 22: 0.8
May 29: 0.8
June 5: 0.7
June 12: 0.8

Analysis: *Sunday Night Heat* has settled into an average rating of 0.8 over the past several weeks, a disappointment compared to the 1.0 to 1.2 range of a couple of years ago. As of late, *Heat* has become a showcase for top independent stars, including C.M. Punk and Teddy Hart, both of whom have also appeared on *Velocity*. Michael Cole replaced Todd Grisham on the One Night Stand pre-show on June 12, snickering as ECW fans drowned out Jonathan Coachman with profane chants.

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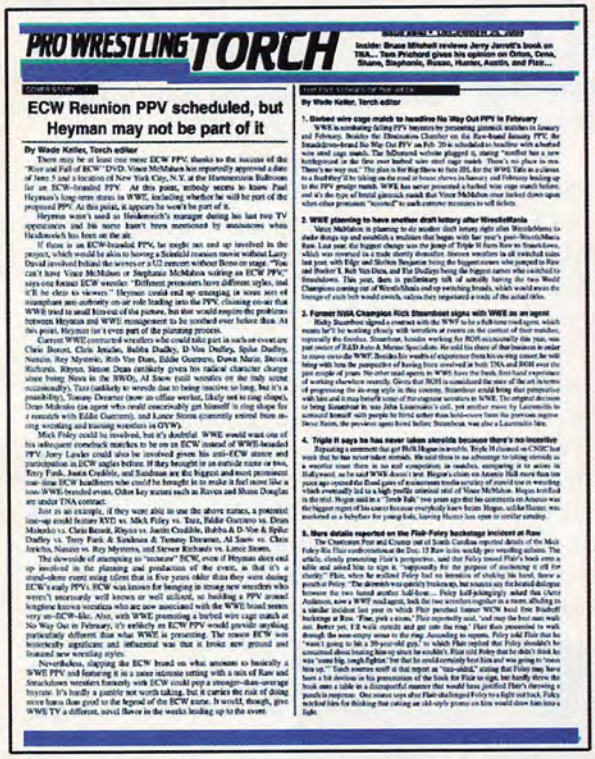

PRO WRESTLING TORCH

Inside: Bruce Mitchell reviews Jerry Jarrett's book on TNA... Tom Prichard gives his opinion on Orton, Cena, Shane, Stephanie, Russo, Hunter, Austin, and Flair...

ECW Reunion PPV scheduled, but Heyman may not be part of it

By Wade Keller, Torch editor

There may be at least one more ECW PPV, thanks to the success of the "Rise and Fall of ECW" DVD. Vince McMahon has reportedly approved a date of June 5 and a location of New York City, N.Y. at the Hammerstein Ballroom for an ECW-branded PPV. At this point, nothing seems to know Paul Heyman's long-term status in WWE, including whether he will be part of the proposed PPV. At this point, it appears he won't be part of it.

Heyman wasn't used in Heidenreich's manager during his last two TV appearances and his name hasn't been mentioned by announcers when Heidenreich has been on the air.

If there is an ECW-branded PPV, he might not end up involved in the project, which would be akin to having a Seinfeld reunion movie without Larry David involved behind the scenes or a U2 concert without Bono on stage. "You can't have Vince McMahon or Stephanie McMahon walking on ECW PPV," says one former ECW wrestler. "Different promoters have different styles, and it'll be clear to viewers." Heyman could end up managing in some sort of triumphant anti-authority on-air role leading into the PPV, claiming on-air that WWE tried to steal him out of the picture, but that would require the problems between Heyman and WWE management to be resolved ever before then. At this point, Heyman isn't even part of the planning process.

Current WWE contracted wrestlers who could take part in such an event are Chris Benoit, Chris Jericho, Bubba Dudley, D-Von Dudley, Spike Dudley, Nunzio, Rey Mysterio, Rob Van Dam, Eddie Guerrero, Dawn Marie, Steven Richards, Rhyno, Simon Dean (unlikely given his radical character change since being Nova in the RWDs), Al Snow (still wrestles on the indy scene occasionally), Taz (unlikely to wrestle due to being inactive so long, but it's a possibility), Tommy Dreamer (now an office worker, likely not in ring shape), Dean Malenko (an agent who could conceivably get himself in ring shape for a rematch with Eddie Guerrero), and Lance Storm (currently retired from in-ring wrestling and training wrestlers in OVW).

Mick Foley could be involved, but it's doubtful. WWE would want one of his subsequent comeback matches to be on an ECW instead of WWE-branded PPV. Jerry Lawler could also be involved given his anti-ECW stance and participation in ECW angles before. If they brought in an outside name or two, Terry Funk, Justin Credible, and Sandman are the biggest and most prominent non-time ECW headliners who could be brought in to make it feel more like a non-WWE-branded event. Other key names such as Raven and Shane Douglas are under TNA contract.

Just as an example, if they were able to use the above names, a potential line-up could feature RVD vs. Mick Foley vs. Taz, Eddie Guerrero vs. Dean Malenko vs. Chris Benoit, Rhyno vs. Justin Credible, Bubba & D-Von & Spike Dudley vs. Terry Funk & Sandman & Tommy Dreamer, Al Snow vs. Chris Jericho, Nunzio vs. Rey Mysterio, and Steven Richards vs. Lance Storm.

The downside of attempting to "recreate" ECW, even if Heyman does end up involved in the planning and production of the event, is that it's a stand-alone event using talent that is five years older than they were during ECW's early PPVs. ECW was known for bringing in strong new wrestlers who weren't necessarily well known or well utilized, so building a PPV around longtime known wrestlers who are now associated with the WWE brand seems very un-ECW-like. Also, with WWE promoting a barbed wire cage match at No Way Out in February, it's unlikely an ECW PPV would provide anything particularly different than what WWE is presenting. The reason ECW was historically significant and influential was that it broke new ground and featured new wrestling styles.

Nevertheless, slapping the ECW brand on what amounts to basically a WWE PPV and featuring it in a more intimate setting with a mix of Raw and Smackdown wrestlers formerly with ECW could pop a stronger-than-average buyrate. It's hardly a gamble not worth taking, but it carries the risk of doing more harm than good to the legend of the ECW name. It would, though, give WWE TV a different, novel flavor in the weeks leading up to the event.

By Wade Keller, Torch editor

1. Barbed wire cage match to headline No Way Out PPV in February

WWE is continuing falling PPV buyrates by presenting gimmick matches in January and February. Besides the Elimination Chamber on the Raw-branded January PPV, the Smackdown-brand No Way Out PPV on Feb. 20 is scheduled to headline with a barbed wire steel cage match. The InDemand website plugged it, stating "conflict has a new battleground in the first ever barbed wire steel cage match. There's no place to run. There's no way out." The plan is for Big Show vs. Brock III, for the WWE Title to be a classic to a feud they'd be taking on the road at house shows in January and February leading up to the PPV grudge match. WWE has never presented a barbed wire cage match before, and it's the type of brutal gimmick match that Vince McMahon once looked down upon when other promoters "resorted" to such extreme measures to sell tickets.

2. WWE planning to have another draft lottery after WrestleMania

Vince McMahon is planning to do another draft lottery right after WrestleMania to shake things up and establish a rivalries that began with last year's post-WrestleMania Raw. Last year, the biggest change was the jump of Triple H from Raw to Smackdown, which was reversed in a trade shortly thereafter. Steroid wrestlers in all switched sides last year, with Edge and Christian Benjamin being the biggest names who jumped to Raw and Booker T, Rob Van Dam, and The Dudleys being the biggest names who switched to Smackdown. This year, there is preliminary talk of actually having the two World Champions coming out of WrestleMania end up switching brands, which would mean the lineups of each both would switch, unless they negotiated a trade of the actual titles.

3. Former NWA Champion Rick Steamboat signs with WWE on an agent

Ricky Steamboat signed a contract with the WWE to be a full-time road agent, which means he'll be working closely with wrestlers at events on the context of their matches, especially the finishes. Steamboat, besides working for ROH occasionally this year, was part owner of R.J.D Auto & Marine Specialists. He sold his share of that business in order to move onto the WWE. Besides his wealth of experience from his on-ring career, he will bring with him the perspective of having been involved at both TNA and ROH over the past couple of years. No other road agents in WWE have the fresh, first-hand experience of working elsewhere recently. Given that ROH is considered the state of the art in terms of progressing the in-ring style in this country, Steamboat could bring that perspective with him and it may benefit some of the younger wrestlers in WWE. The original decision to bring Steamboat in was John Laurinaitis's call, yet another move by Laurinaitis to surround himself with people he hired rather than holdovers from the previous regime. Dave Baum, the previous agent hired before Steamboat, was also a Laurinaitis hire.

4. Triple H says he has never taken steroids because there's no incentive

Repeating a comment that got Hulk Hogan in trouble, Triple H claimed on CNBC last week that he has never taken steroids. He said there is no advantage to taking steroids as a wrestler since there is no real competition in matches, comparing it to actors in Hollywood, so he said WWE doesn't test. Hogan's claim on Arsenio Hall more than ten years ago opened the flood gates of mainstream media scrutiny of steroid use in wrestling which eventually led to a high profile criminal trial of Vince McMahon. Hogan testified in the trial. Hogan said in a "Inside Talk" two years ago that his comments on Arsenio was the biggest regret of his career because everybody knew heroes Hogan, unlike Hunter, was marketed as a babyface for young kids, leaving Hunter less open to similar scrutiny.

5. More details reported on the Flair-Foley backstage incident at Raw

The Charlotte Post and Courier out of South Carolina reported details of the Mick Foley-Ric Flair confrontation at the Dec. 13 Raw in his weekly pro wrestling column. The article, closely presenting Flair's perspective, said that Foley issued Flair's book onto a table and asked him to sign it, "supposedly for the purpose of auctioning it off for charity." Flair, when he realized Foley had no intention of stocking his hand, threw a punch at Foley. "The skirmish was quickly broken up, but remains any for heated dialogue between the two heated another half-hour. ... Foley left pulsingly asked that Carter Anderson, now a WWE road agent, lock the two wrestlers together in a room, alluding to a similar incident last year in which Flair punched former WCW head Eric Bischoff backstage at Raw. 'Fine, pick a room,' Flair reportedly said, 'and meet the best man walk out. Better yet, I'll walk outside and get into the ring.' Flair then proceeded to walk through the non-empty arena to the ring. According to reports, Foley told Flair that he 'wasn't going to hit a 59-year-old guy,' to which Flair replied that Foley shouldn't be concerned about beating him up since he couldn't. Flair told Foley that he didn't think he was 'some big, tough fighter,' but that he could eventually beat him and was going to 'mess him up.'" Torch sources verify that report as "one-sided," stating that Foley may have been a bit derisive in his presentation of the book for Flair to sign, but hardly threw the book onto a table in a disrespectful manner that would have justified Flair's throwing a punch in response. One source says after Flair challenged Foley to a fight out back, Foley watched him for thinking that cutting an old-style promo on him would draw him into a fight.

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the steel cage

By Jason Langin

JUNE WAS A memorable month for wrestling this year. It gave us the highly anticipated WWE pay-per-view One Night Stand, an event that honored ECW and brought back for "one night only" many stars from the now-defunct organization's glory years. In addition to numerous ECW alumni that had already been wrestling full-time for Vince McMahon, the event also showcased such competitors as The Sandman, Psicosis, Super Crazy, Sabu, Masato Tanaka, and even the BWO. Shane Douglas' Hardcore Homecoming came off the very same weekend. "The Franchise's" equally exciting event featured Raven, Jerry Lynn, Terry Funk, Justin Credible, and many, many others.

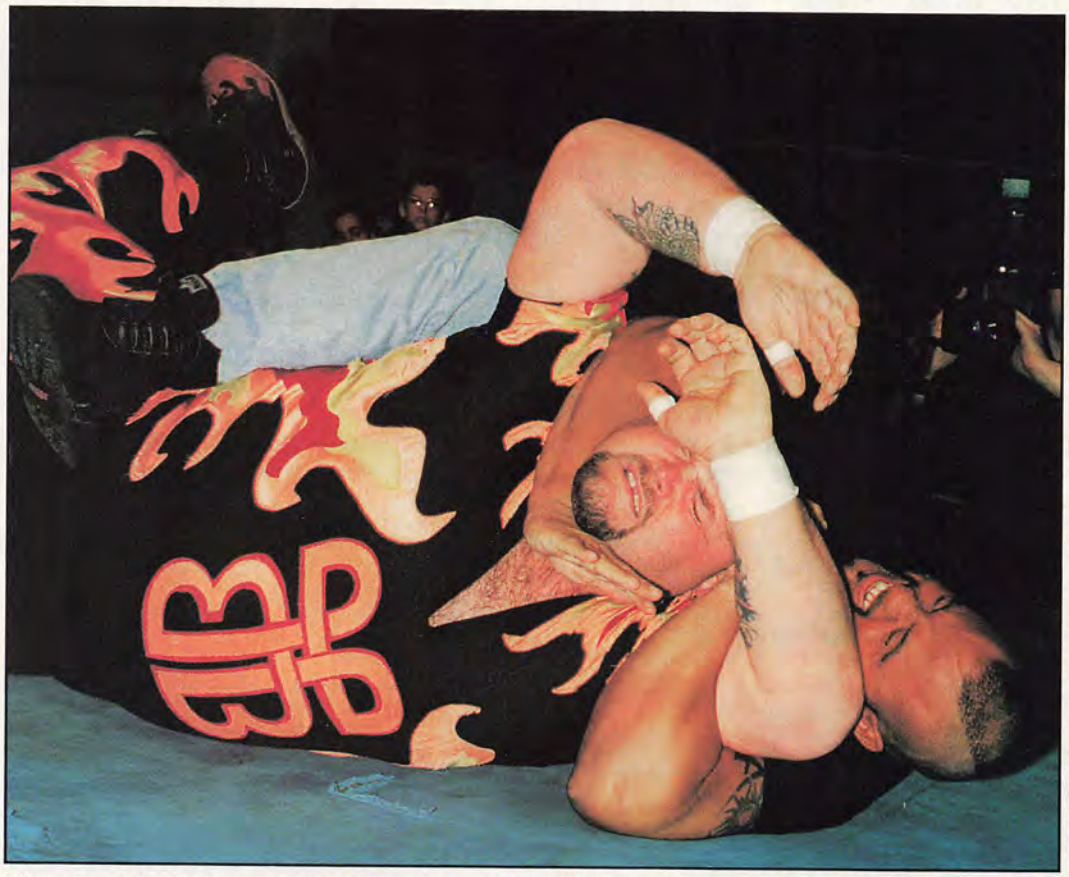
It was a little strange for me to watch these reunion shows. It has only been four years since ECW closed its doors, and many of the hardcore regulars now see action in either WWE or TNA. Plus, while stars like Chris Benoit, Chris Jericho, Eddie Guerrero, and Rey Misterio Jr. did make their marks in ECW, they are probably better known for their time in WCW. However, no one is clamoring for a WCW reunion.

No, people attended these aforementioned events because they miss the general idea of what ECW was. And I don't mean the hardcore nature of it. Yes, I was a huge ECW fan, but not necessarily because I loved to see guys smashed through flaming tables.

What I enjoyed, and what I think so many others enjoyed, was the sheer unpredictability of the promotion. I can honestly tell you that when I watched ECW, I never knew what was going to happen next. Chairs flying over my head in a near-mini-riot during a Dudley Boyz match and Tazz (only one "z" back then) jumping off a truck onto Bam Bam Bigelow were two wild moments that I witnessed first-hand. That was fun. That was unpredictable. That was ECW.

That kind of unpredictability can be hard to come by in wrestling. I will never forget taking in an episode of *WWF Wrestling Challenge* in 1986 with my dad. I was watching a backstage segment in which Paul Orndorff was placing a call to Hulk Hogan on a pay phone. (Boy am I dating myself. No cell phones!) I told my father that "Mr. Wonderful" was going to turn against the "Hulkster." The next week, in the middle of a tag team match that pitted the two against King Kong Bundy and Big John Studd, Orndorff betrayed Hogan.

From that point on, I started to try to predict what was going to happen each week. It didn't lessen my interest in wrestling. In a way, it sort of *fueled* my interest.



Like a lot of fans out there, Jason Langin misses ECW, but not the blood and guts and extreme violence. He misses the unpredictability of ECW. Tazz and Bam Bam Bigelow provided him with one of his best (and most unpredictable) ECW experiences.

I wanted to see if my predictions came true. Some were pretty out there, but others were right on target. With ECW, though, I didn't waste my time with predictions, because I never would have gotten them right.

ECW wasn't the only organization that kept me fooled, however. There was one other long-forgotten federation that I loved. I think it was 1987 when I was fortunate enough to be blessed with wrestling on television every day of the week. Now keep in mind I did not have cable. (I think my block was the last street in the state of New York to be set up for cable. We did have running water, though.) What I did have was a great set of rabbit ears that picked up a certain UHF station that ran wrestling shows every day at 6:00 p.m. On Mondays and Fridays, I got the NWA. That meant I got my Road Warriors fix twice a week. What a rush!

The old UWF—which featured a young Ultimate Warrior and young Sting together as The Bladerunners—was right up there with ECW among Langin's all-time favorite promotions. It, too, could be unpredictable. He'd love to see wrestling in 2005 become less predictable.

Tuesdays and Thursdays featured World Class Championship Wrestling, and Wednesdays meant California Championship Wrestling. Wednesday was definitely the low point of the week, but I watched anyway. Saturday and Sunday mornings were reserved for WWF shows, with the added bonus of a *Saturday Night's Main Event* once a month or so on NBC.

But Saturday at 6 p.m. was a special time, because it was time for the show I liked best. The Saturday broadcast featured the old Universal Wrestling Federation. The history of the UWF was quite short. ECW's existence was an eternity compared to the UWF's. The UWF evolved from the NWA's Mid-South territory, a unique group on its own. However, the UWF had a bit more. It was a lot like ECW. A mix of up-and-coming stars, along with some older veterans still capable of mixing it up. I just loved the roster from top to bottom.

There were the champions—Terry "Bamm Bamm" Gordy and Big Bubba Rogers. The unstoppable One Man Gang and the ultra-tough "Dr. Death" Steve Williams. Plus there were The Bladerunners, an awesome tag team made up of a young Sting and Ultimate Warrior before they got those names, The Fantastics (a pretty boy team that I actually *liked*), Rick Steiner, Eddie Gilbert, The Freebirds, and Ted DiBiase.

The UWF also had a lot of wrestlers that were great before they were "cartoonized" in the WWF. It had Hacksaw Duggan when he was just a tough guy, not a howling goober. It had The Sheepherders, a maniacal and violent tag team before they became the head-licking Bushwhackers. It had Koko B. Ware when he was just a high-flyer, not a bird-carrying, suspenders-wearing goof. It even had The Missing Link before he had the green paint and the hair ... no, wait, he always had that.

The point is that this was exciting, unpredictable stuff. I never knew what was going to happen and never knew whom I would see next. When the UWF was finally purchased by Jim Crockett, I was so excited to see the potential matchups. It was a lot like the WWE draft lottery is today. Because of that merger, fans were able to see Ric Flair against Sting, the Steiners against Doom, and more.

I'm not trying to convince you that the UWF was the best federation, just as I am not arguing that ECW was the best. But both groups fed that interest in wrestling that kept me tuning in. I didn't know what I'd be in store for from one week to the next, but I knew that it would be something I wanted to see.

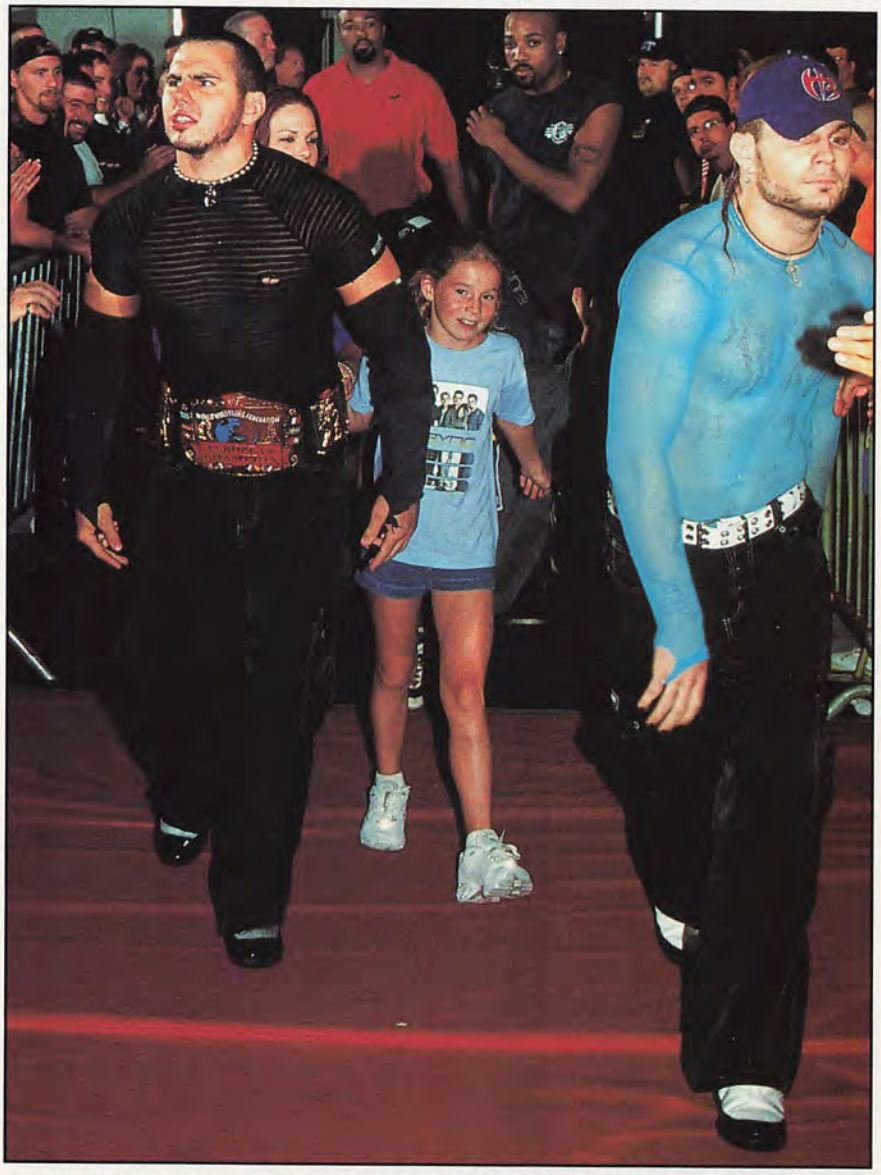
I don't think WWE needs to bring back ECW for good. It just needs to work on giving fans something new that makes them want to see more, too. □

win, lose, or draw

By Harry Burkett

HE WAS FORCED out of the company, amid fans' cries that he was "screwed over," and he's almost made a second career out of criticizing WWE. Some call him a bitter ex-employee. Others call him the conscience of wrestling.

Anyone who became a wrestling fan after 1997 will assume I'm referring to Matt Hardy. After all, Hardy underwent major knee surgery last August and, while he was back home in North Carolina going through rehabilitation, his long-time girlfriend, Lita, was pursuing a relationship with Edge. Rumors about the love triangle ran rampant on the Internet until Hardy posted a message on his Web site, claiming Lita had cheated on him. He went on to rip into his former pal Edge, blaming him for the breakup.



We'll likely see The Hardy Boyz reunite before the end of the summer as the sport's hottest free agent, Matt Hardy, finally hits the open market. Matt has strengthened his fan base since losing Lita and getting canned by WWE. Harry Burkett, however, doesn't sympathize with him that much.

Most fans sympathized with Hardy. The poor guy was at home with a bad knee and fighting hard to make a comeback, only to have one of his best friends steal his girl. WWE then fired Hardy because of his outspoken comments on the Internet. Meanwhile, Creative concocted an entire storyline based on Hardy's misfortune, with Lita turning against her on-air husband, Kane (serving as the TV proxy for Hardy), to join Edge. Making things worse, Edge and Lita shared a passionate kiss on the entrance ramp to end the segment.

Is there any doubt why Hardy was sick to his stomach? Is there any doubt why WWE fans have booed Edge and Lita on two continents?

The first paragraph of this column describes Matt Hardy perfectly. But it could also refer to any number of wrestlers over the years. If you became a wrestling fan before 1997, you probably assumed I was referring to Bret Hart. In the notorious Survivor Series double-cross of that year, Vince McMahon not only screwed him out of the World title, but he compounded the crime by handing the belt over to Hart's worst enemy, Shawn Michaels. Hart gained even more sympathy when his younger brother Owen died at a WWE pay-per-view in 1999. McMahon was blamed for approving a stunt that, in hindsight, put Owen in harm's way. The WWE chairman's perceived insensitivity toward Owen's widow, along with a long legal battle with the Hart family in the aftermath, made Bret a very sympathetic figure.

Hart retained his soapbox through his Web site and his "Sharpshooter"

column in the *Calgary Sun.* No issue has been too large or small, with Hart commenting on everything from Chris Jericho taking down Bill Goldberg during a backstage scuffle to Michaels telling Montreal fans to "get over it" regarding the Survivor Series double-cross. Whenever any controversy arises in WWE, the Internet scribes know Hart will provide a colorfully derogatory quote about his former employer.

Since when did Hart become the moral arbiter of pro wrestling? Since when is he the best judge of right or wrong in the industry? When McMahon screwed him over at Survivor Series, Hart forever gained moral superiority over WWE. But, considering Hart hasn't been a member of the WWE locker room in eight years, he's becoming increasingly out of touch with the inner workings of that company.

Enter Matt Hardy, the new conscience of wrestling. He's the former insider who is suddenly an outsider, surely someone who knows all the juicy secrets. Thus far, Hardy has limited his commentary to his personal situation and hasn't shot off opinions about McMahon or other WWE superstars. Referring to the Lita-Edge-Kane storyline on his Web site, Hardy wrote, "I obviously see why the company did it, but that doesn't mean it was a good moral or business decision. I won't be watching *Raw* anymore on Monday nights. I refuse to support a situation that has wronged me so much."

Bless you, Matt Hardy. How can I argue with someone who has been treated so unfairly? Forget Lita's side of the story. To hell with Edge and Vince. Obviously, Matt Hardy has replaced Mr. Wrestling II as the sport's "paragon of probity."

But not so fast. I sympathize with Hardy only to a certain point. Even when Hardy makes such pious statements, he still sounds as if he would return to WWE at the first opportunity. His Web posting continues: "If you do watch or attend the live shows, now is the time to chant for me if you'd like. [Lita] and [Edge] have already been put together on-air, so nothing worse can happen from my personal perspective. It's much better to chant, 'You screwed Matt' or 'We want Matt,' as opposed to chanting for whoever they plug into my real life role in the storyline. Don't let them pass the heat—chanting 'Matt' shows you're much smarter than they make you out to be. They hate to hear any Matt chants because it's extremely rebellious and they really can't do anything to stop it except acknowledge me."

Lita has become arguably the most hated superstar in WWE for her role in the Matt Hardy situation. And she has gone along with WWE's exploitation of it. Burkett thinks there's a good chance Hardy would, too, if WWE came calling again.

What? Why would Hardy want to be acknowledged by a company that is exploiting his private life? It seems tacky that he's encouraging those "We want Matt" chants. Why does he give a damn about what's happening on *Raw?* I thought he wasn't going to watch it anymore! Or is Hardy frustrated that so many other people are exploiting his personal situation and he isn't getting a piece of the action? Would Hardy jump at the chance for a feud with Edge that would put him back in WWE's good graces? In my mind, the answer to that question would determine whether Hardy should receive our sympathy.

I'm sorry Hardy had to suffer the embarrassment of his girlfriend leaving him in such a public way. But I'll save my tears for someone in a worse situation. When his non-compete runs out expires in July, he will be the hottest free agent on the independent circuit—much hotter than his brother, Jeff, was last year. After all, this is the Hardy who actually shows up for all his matches. He and Jeff are about to release an insider DVD, and Matt could become an instant main-eventer in TNA if he chooses to do so. And I still wouldn't be surprised if he faces Edge at SummerSlam.

So, what's the message in all of this? Matt was treated badly, but that doesn't make Lita and Edge horrible people. And, yes, WWE is exploiting it. But this is the rasslin' business, and I'm not convinced Matt wouldn't exploit it further under the right circumstances. Meanwhile, we might just see Bret Hart appear for his induction into the WWE Hall of Fame in 2006. Would that make Hart a hypocrite? I don't think so. He'd just have to climb down from the moral high ground and live here with the rest of us.

I know, I know, you old-timers claim your guy, Bruno Sammartino, is the real conscience of wrestling. He's been on the outs with WWE longer than anyone else, right? I have only one thing to say about that: Thank goodness "Da Brune" doesn't do the Web! □

the straight shooter

By Dan Murphy

ONE THING'S FOR sure—Aaron Weiss has guts.

Weiss is the man behind Pro Wrestling Superstars' Still Standing pay-per-view, a unique multi-promotional event that was scheduled to air on In Demand PPV on June 22 (and rebroadcast several times during the following week).

The concept is surprisingly simple: Weiss selects the most interesting matches from a variety of participating promotions and airs them on a single PPV. Weiss, a former consultant for Coliseum Video with wrestling ties going back almost 20 years, has been airing his PWS pay-per-views throughout Canada on Bell Express since 2003. For Still Standing, his first foray into the U.S. market, Weiss collected some intriguing independent matches, including Eddie Guerrero vs. Devon "Crowbar" Storm, A.J. Styles vs. The Amazing Red, Chris Sabin vs. Sabu, a classic match pitting Andre the Giant and Dick the Bruiser against Ox Baker and Baron Karl Von Krupp, and four other offerings. And the whole 90-minute package was being sold for just $9.95.

You can see Edge on WWE pay-per-view almost every month, but now you might get a chance to see him on PPV when he was known as Sexton Hardcastle in his pre-WWE life. A man named Aaron Weiss and a group called Pro Wrestling Superstars are taking a bit of a risk by making that possible.

The buy rate for Still Standing won't be available for a while, but if Weiss hits his target number of buys, he plans to air more PWS pay-per-views in the U.S. in the coming months. He has acquired the video rights to Scott D'Amore's Border City Wrestling (D'Amore is an executive consultant for PWS), USA Pro Wrestling, Montreal's International Wrestling, and other promotions for a true treasure trove of indy footage. Weiss is also releasing choice footage on DVD and continues to offer regular pay-per-views in the Canadian market.

"Our pay-per-views have been selling very well in Canada, and I think that's a reflection that there's not a lot of other options for wrestling fans out there right now," Weiss said. "Were trying to give fans something a little different."

That means classic matches with a young Andre the Giant, a clean-cut babyface by the name of Dino Bravo, and two skinny kids by the names of Sexton Hardcastle and Christian Cage, better known today as Edge and Christian.

But with WWE PPV buy rates in a slump (for the most part) and TNA struggling just to stay afloat, what makes Weiss think there's a market for taped independent matches in the competitive pay-per-view universe? Will he be the next wrestling fan to lose his shirt by investing his time and money in the wrestling business?

"Not to sound cheesy or melodramatic, but I think there's so much instability in the world today that some of these classic matches from 20 or 30 years ago bring you back to a time when things were more innocent," Weiss said.

If fan interest in the WWE Hall of Fame and WWE 24/7 are any indication, Weiss might be on to something. For any wrestling fan whose interest in the sport goes back more than 15 years or so, looking back on the days when Andre was unbeatable and Ox Baker's heart punch was the most feared move in wrestling is like hearkening back to your old paper route or your first bike. For many of us, it's a part of our childhood, and it's nice to see someone trying to bring back some of those wonderful memories while showcasing the stars of tomorrow. It's a great mix, and, I can only hope for Weiss, a winning formula.

* * *

If Weiss is cautiously optimistic about his chances for success, then the Jarretts and the money brokers at Panda Energy have to be very nervous regarding the future of TNA.

A few weeks before I sat down to write this column, TNA's one-year

Excited about a match between, say, B.G. James and Michael Shane on the next TNA PPV? It's hard to get excited if TNA doesn't have a weekly TV show to remind you of that next PPV. And it didn't—for a few weeks at least—this spring. That made Dan Murphy even more worried about TNA's future.

contract with Fox Sports Net expired, and the much-rumored Monday night deal with WGN had yet to be finalized. That left TNA without a national television platform (at least temporarily) to promote its monthly pay-per-views.

For the past three years, TNA has been surprising a lot of people (me included), who expected the company to slide into bankruptcy. Let's face it, making money running a large wrestling company is pretty darn close to impossible, but TNA has somehow managed to generate enough revenue (and raise enough money through deep-pocketed backers) to survive longer than most people thought possible.

But going an extended period of time without TV—and anything more than a couple of weeks should be considered an extended period of time here—is a huge step backward for the company that had been moving slowly and steadily toward self-sufficiency.

TNA used a very different business model than many smaller—and arguably more stable—promotions have used. ECW built a cult following through savvy targeted marketing, by embracing the Internet, and by providing a product that was different in style and atmosphere from anything else out there at the time. That model built ECW into a national force. Ironically, it was the one-two punch of TV and PPV that ultimately weakened and, along with talent raids, escalating costs, and creative burnout, killed ECW. Ring of Honor has used a similar approach, developing a passionate underground following.

TNA has never really built that diehard fan base. It came close with its exciting X division, but the promoters still haven't gotten behind the X division enough to overcome some stale main events and the occasional nonsensical storyline on top. Instead, TNA just seemed as if it rose from the ashes of WCW, with many of the same stars along for the ride. Now, like WCW, it is at a critical crossroads. Only we might not get to see what happens on TV.

Without TV, TNA is doomed. Even with TV, it's in critical condition. Note to TNA management: Forget about competing against WWE head-to-head on Monday nights. Just get back on TV, even if you have to continue to pay a network for your time slot. Remember, out of sight, out of mind.

Just ask anyone associated with the NHL. □

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You're at the airport. You see your favorite wrestler relaxing in one of the terminals. You rush up to him or her as questions fill your excited mind. There are certain things you just *have* to know about this person. Well, these are the 12 questions you'd never think of asking

12 questions

JAMES GIBSON

So, what have you been doing since we last saw you on WWE (as Jamie Noble)?

Ring of Honor, some independents, a few tours of Japan. Staying moving and enjoying my life.

What's the best part of working for New Japan?

The experience. Getting to wrestle Jushin Liger and Koji Kanemoto. Just being able to follow in the footsteps of my heroes, Dean Malenko and Chris Benoit.

You sometimes team with American Dragon. What do you think of his new creepy look?

I love it. It's him.

Waffle House, Denny's, or IHOP?

Waffle House. *(Calling to Chad Collyer)* That's where they have Bert's Chili, right? Got to be Waffle House then.

You have a choice between Ashlee Simpson, Ryan Seacrest, and Jim Hellwig to live with on a deserted island for the rest of your life. Which would you choose and why?

Who's Ryan Seacrest? *("The guy from **American Idol.**")* Oh, and who's Ashlee Simpson? *("Jessica Simpson's younger sister—the girl who got busted lip-synching on **Saturday Night Live.**")* Oh. *Hmmmmmm.* Ashlee Simpson then. I've got a better use for those lips than lip-synching.

Do you regularly check to see if your breath stinks?

Do I check to see if my breath stinks? What kind of question is that? Constantly.

If used properly, could flannel be sexy?

When it's on me, it can be.

Which was a worse fate: being a Jung Dragon or being a member of Three Count?

Being a member of Three Count. Boy bands suck.

What was the last *PWI* you read from cover to cover?

The last issue with the *"PWI* 500" in it. The next one will probably be when you finally give me a cover story.

Do you miss WCW yet?

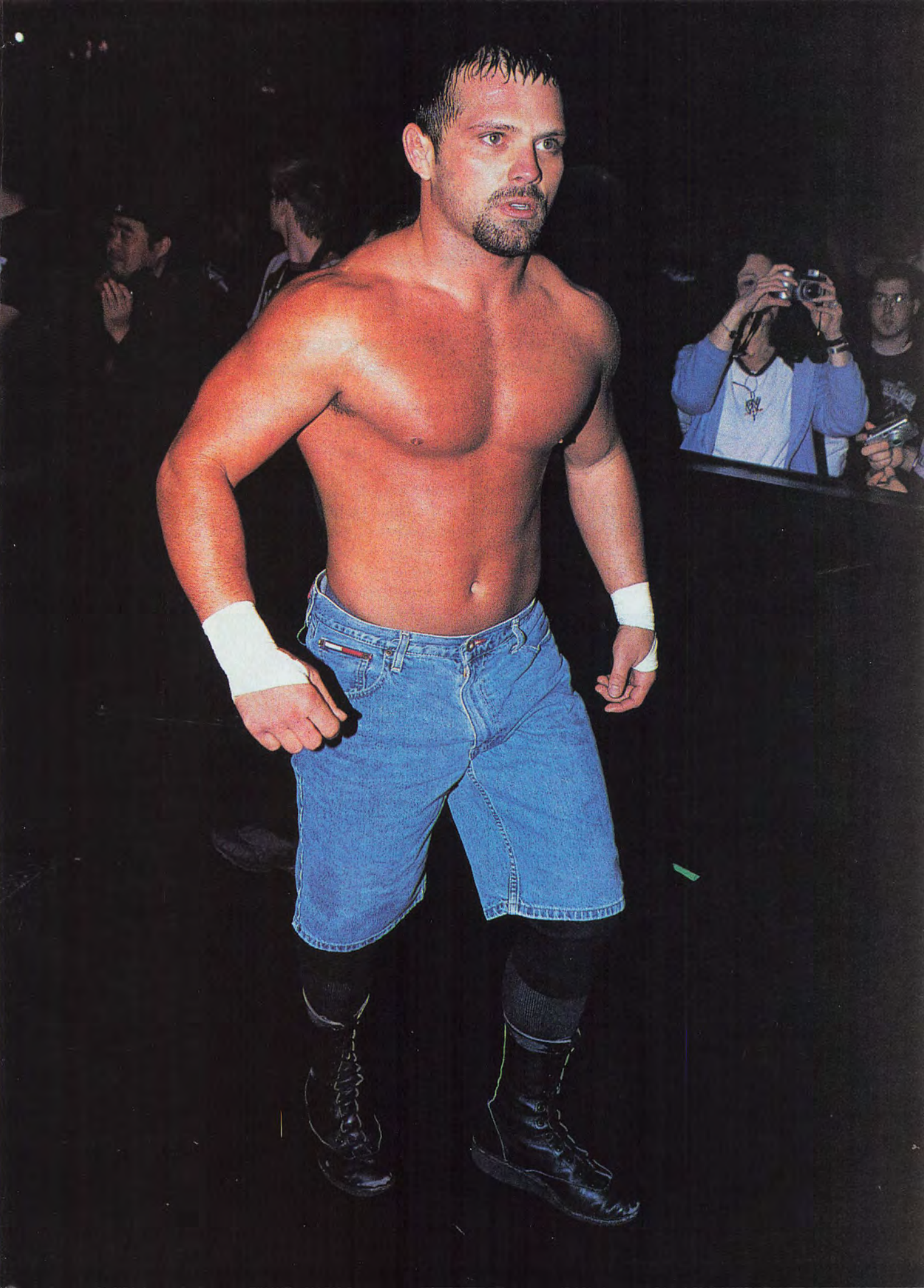
Sometimes. It was a job.

What's the weirdest request a fan ever made of you?

Come see their double-wide.

You have a hammer, a midget, and a roulette wheel. What are your plans for the evening?

Make sure everyone knows the midget's not my brother. Then use the hammer to break up the roulette wheel so I can make me a new dog pen. □



The Wrestling Observer

Hall of Fame

In each issue, *PWI* will honor one member of the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame, which we recognize as the sport's official Hall of Fame

Jack Brisco

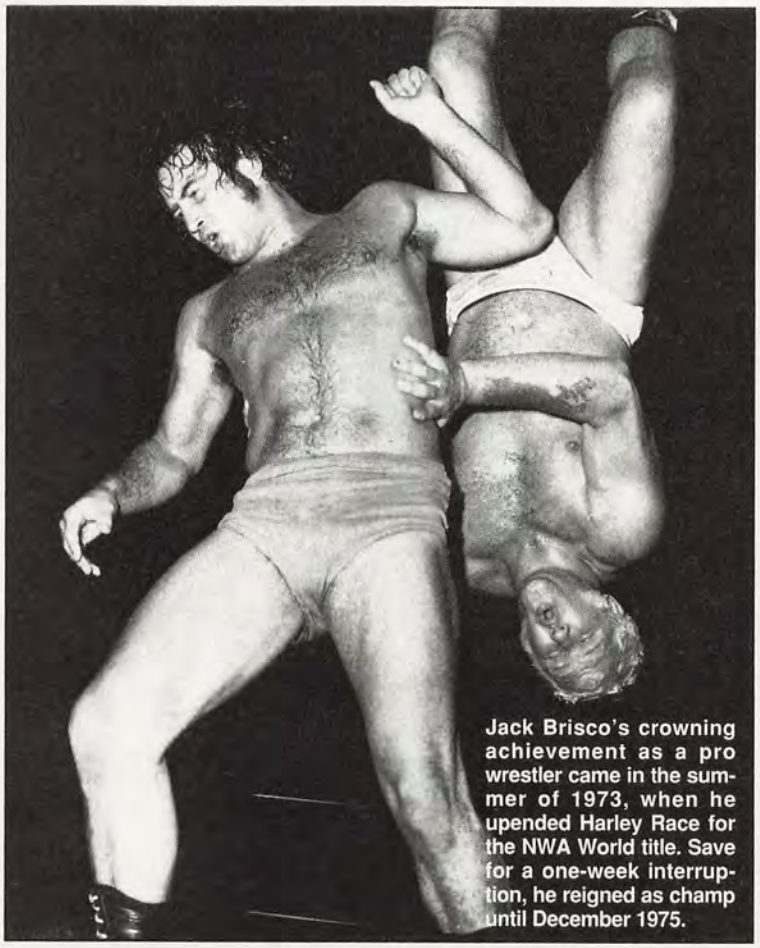
JACK BRISCO IS one of the most successful amateurs ever to step off the collegiate mats and into the squared circle, and one of the great NWA World champions of the 1970s.

Born in Blackwell, Oklahoma, on September 21, 1941, Brisco went on to win three state wrestling titles in high school. He turned down a college football scholarship at Oklahoma in favor of a wrestling scholarship at Oklahoma State. It was the right move. He lost only once in college en route to winning one NCAA championship and becoming a two-time All-American.

After graduation, Brisco decided to try his hand as a pro, debuting in 1965 and adopting the figure-four as his finisher. After successful tours of Australia and Japan, Brisco turned up in Florida, where he beat Masa Saito for the Florida heavyweight title, an important stepping stone to the NWA World title.

A charismatic and skilled technical wrestler, Brisco became one of the young lions of the NWA, embraced by the fans as the leader of a new generation of athletic competitors, the personification of the blossoming youth culture finally making its way into wrestling. In a way, his ascent in wrestling was comparable to the rise of Joe Namath in the NFL, although "Broadway Joe" was a bit more cosmopolitan than "Blackwell Jack."

In 1969, Jack's brother, Jerry, followed in his big brother's footsteps, and the Briscos became one of the sport's premier teams. Over the next 15 years, Jack and Jerry would win more than 20 tag team championships, including the NWA World, Georgia, and Florida tag titles on multiple occasions. The Briscos also had a major feud with another band of brothers, Terry and Dory Funk Jr., that rocked the NWA throughout the 1970s. They appeared on the inaugural Starrcade supercard in 1983, losing to Ricky Steamboat and Jay Youngblood. They won the NWA World tag title for a third and final time on April 4, 1984, beating Mark Youngblood and Wahoo McDaniel, only to drop the gold back 23 days later.



Jack Brisco's crowning achievement as a pro wrestler came in the summer of 1973, when he upended Harley Race for the NWA World title. Save for a one-week interruption, he reigned as champ until December 1975.

Jack also won Florida tag titles with Jimmy Garvin and Cyclone Negro.

While Jack and

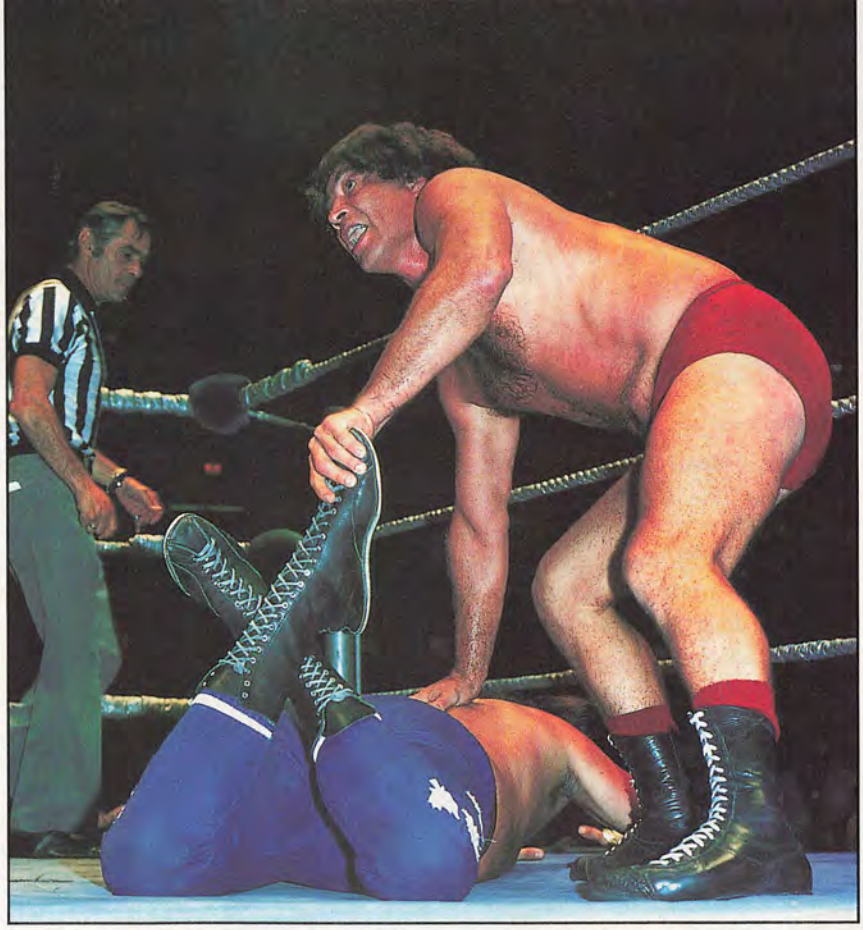
Jerry were a major tag team force, Jack's crowning moment came as a singles competitor. After three years of chasing first Dory Funk and then Harley Race for the NWA World title, Brisco finally broke through and won the World championship, toppling Race in Houston on July 20, 1973.

Brisco, who had been voted Most Popular Wrestler of the Year by *PWI* readers in 1972 (tied with Fred Curry), defended the championship against the top names in the NWA. He was named 1973's Wrestler of the Year by *PWI* readers and held the NWA World title until December 2, 1974, when he was upset by Shohei Baba in Japan. Brisco regained the title just one week later and reigned for a year and a day before succumbing to Terry Funk.

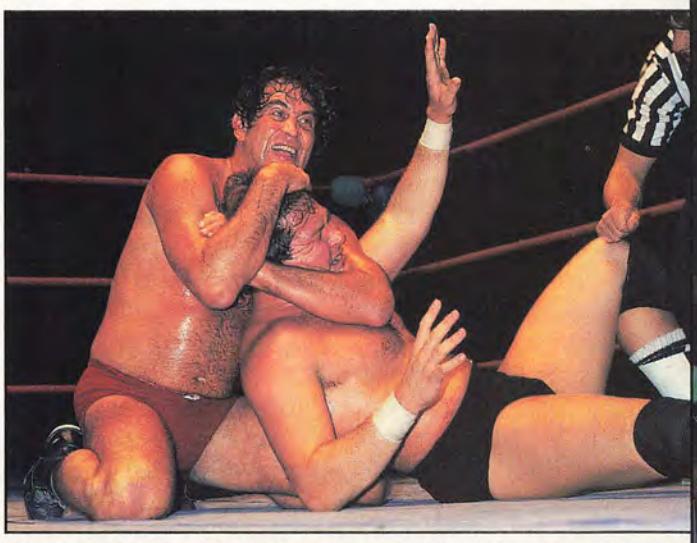
Brisco held nine major singles championships for a total of 24 times, including two Missouri title reigns, five Florida title reigns, four Mid-Atlantic title reigns, and five reigns as Southern champion.

Brisco retired from wrestling in 1984 to concentrate on his auto shop, The Brisco Brothers' Body Shop, in Tampa. He proved to be the rare wrestler who left the game at a relatively young age (43) and never looked back. Brother Jerry accepted a front office position with the WWF and gained new fame alongside Pat Patterson as one of Vince McMahon's on-screen stooges in the late-1990s.

Jack's autobiography, *Brisco,* tells the story of his transition from amateur success to the pinnacle of the pro wrestling world. He is a charter member of the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame. □



A very skilled and very decorated amateur wrestler, Brisco knew just how to target a particular part of an opponent's body (in this case Stan Stasiak's legs) and work it over throughout a match.



Brisco wrestled some of the top stars of the '80s before retiring (for good) before that decade was half over. Check him out against Ted DiBiase (above) and Ric Flair (right). He was finishing foes with the figure-four before the "Nature Boy."

independent roundup

By Liz Hunter

THE FIRST VOLLEYS have been exchanged in the war between NWA/ECCW and New Japan Pro Wrestling. As mentioned in our last issue, NJPW wrestlers **American Dragon** and **Puma** attacked **Aaron Idol** at the Pacific Cup Tournament. NWA/ECCW wrestlers, of course, vowed to seek revenge.

A few days later, however, New Japan Pro Wrestling representative **David Marquez** left a voice message for ECCW owner **Dave Republic**, stating, "We're not trying to insult you, but you're on a different level than us when it comes to the pro wrestling business, and unfortunately, **Mr. [Antonio] Inoki** doesn't have the time to review everything that is said or challenged or whatever in the world of pro wrestling. So, unfortunately, we really don't have an answer for you, so you and your **Juggernauts**, and **Hot and Bothered**, and a couple of **Moondogs**. I guess just continue doing your shows, and we wish you all the success in the world, but, unfortunately, you're not at our caliber, and thus we're just ... not going to answer your challenge."

Could we soon see Canadian star Juggernaut defending Extreme Canadian Championship Wrestling's honor against some of New Japan Pro Wrestling's finest athletes? He's just one of several singled out by NJPW as a target.

Now on to some sad news, **Dan Quirk**, who wrestled professionally as **Spider** in the Northeast, died on May 28 from injuries sustained during a match in Taunton, Massachusetts. According to reports, Quirk, 22, was on the receiving end of a moonsault by his opponent, **The Hi-Lite Kid**, when he crashed to the floor underneath Kid's full weight. Quirk hit his head against the hard, unprotected floor and immediately started bleeding. The match was stopped, and Quirk was taken by ambulance to Taunton's Morton Hospital and Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead.

Who ever thought watching a TNA pay-per-view would pay off for **Steve DeMarco**? DeMarco had been trying to wrest the Professional Championship Wrestling heavyweight title from **Shadow** (a.k.a. **Lance Hoyt** in TNA) for several months. PCW co-owners **Thomas** and **Chris Bussey** announced that DeMarco could not get his scheduled title match against Shadow at the May 21 show in Arlington, Texas, because of an injury to Shadow's right hand. DeMarco argued that Shadow was on TNA's Hard Justice pay-per-view on May 15, and the hand looked just fine. The Busseys countered DeMarco's claim by making him wrestle **Pendragon** before taking on Shadow. Despite outside interference from Pendragon's attorney, **Paul Lewis**, DeMarco won that match. Later on the card, DeMarco extended his winning streak by defeating Shadow for the title.

World Class Extreme Wrestling's **Dr. Love** lost a "pink slip-on-a-pole" match to **Zane Dawson** on May 21. The doctor is now banned from the company for 120 days ... **Mike Quackenbush** won Combat Zone Wrestling's Best of the Best Tournament in Philadelphia. He defeated **Super Dragon**, **Kevin Steen**, and **B-Boy** in a four-way match in the final ... The ROH tag team of **Azriael** and **Dixie** have been forced to split up as the result of a prematch stipulation for their bout with **Izzy** and **Deranged** at the May 7 show in New York City. The losers

of the match had to go their separate ways.

Quick title changes: FIST Wrestling, Peoria, IL, May 29: **Jimmy Jacobs** pinned **Shark Boy** in a five-count match to win the specialty trophy ... **Danny Daniels** and **Arik Cannon** pinned **The Black** and **The Brave** to win the tag trophy ... **Nigel McGuinness** beat **Chris Hero** in a best-of-three-falls match to win the heavyweight trophy ... ***New Age Wrestling Alliance, Gladewater TX, May 29:*** **Jason Skyy** and **Mongoose** beat **Logan** and **Pendragon** to win the tag title ... ***American Pro Wrestling, Spartanburg, SC, May 28:*** **Shane Austin** defeated **Steve Cronic** to win the heavyweight title ... ***Championship Wrestling, Kingsport, TN, May 28:*** **Alyx Winters** defeated National heavyweight champ **Dr. Tom Prichard** in a falls-count-anywhere match to win the title ... **Tony Givens** defeated TV champion **Thorn** to win the title ... ***NWA Pro Wrestling Express, McKeesport, PA, May 28:*** **Nikita Allanov** defeated Three Rivers champion **Chris Taylor** in a ladder match to win the title ... ***CWP, Mineral Wells, TX, May 28:*** **Seth Shai** beat Southern States champ **Kyzer Douglas** to win the title ... ***NWA/ECCW, Surrey, British Columbia, May 27:*** **Aaron Idol** won a three-way match against **Memphis Raines** and **Chance Beckett** to win the junior heavyweight title ... ***Exodus Wrestling Alliance, Lancaster, SC, May 27:*** **Rick Morton** beat **George South Sr.** to win the heavyweight title ... ***High Velocity Wrestling, Hendersonville, NC, May 27:*** **Jesse Black** won a four-corners match against **Kid Kaos**, **Bryan Austin**, and **Cat Daddy** to win the flyweight title ... ***Ulster Championship Wrestling, Malone, Northern Ireland, May 27:*** **The Machine** beat **Dunkan Disorderly** to win the vacant heavyweight championship ... ***World Class Extreme Wrestling, Hamlet, NC, May 21:*** **DJ P-Roc** defeated heavyweight champion **Ali Steele** to win the title ... ***American Pro Wrestling, Spartanburg, SC, May 21:*** **Ostgard** pinned U.S. champ **Kirk Prodigy** to win the title ... ***Carolina Wrestling Association, Statesville, NC, May 21:*** **Mike Lee** defeated **Jimmy Jack Funk Jr.** to win the vacant Intercontinental title ... ***Jersey All Pro Wrestling, Braintree, MA, May 21:*** **Jay Lethal** won a four-way match against **Samoa Joe**, **Kevin Steen**, and **Homicide** for the heavyweight title ... ***Professional Championship Wrestling, Arlington, TX, May 21:*** **Steve DeMarco** beat heavyweight champion **Shadow** to win the belt ... **Robert Evans** won a triple threat match against **Stephen Murphy** and **J.T. LaMotta** to win the cruiserweight belt ... ***Rochester Championship Wrestling, Rochester, NY, May 20:*** **Them Hoosier Boys** beat tag team champs **Degenerates of Society** to win title ... **Shane Murphy** pinned hardcore champ **Alexander Mikado** to win title ... **Johnny Swift** beat lightweight champion **J.C. Money** to win the belt ... **Mr. Czarniak** won a three-way match against **Rob Schulz** and **Sweet Lou** to win the heavyweight title ... ***World of Hurt Wrestling, Amsterdam, NY, May 20:*** **Jim Tanner** defeated **Vendetta** and **Punk** to win the hardcore title ... ***3PW, Philadelphia, PA, May 21:*** **Rockin' Rebel** and **Greg Matthews** won a tag team gauntlet match to win the tag title ... **Roadkill** won a three-way match against **Simon Diamond** and **Slyck Wagner Brown** to win the heavyweight championship ... ***New Generation Wrestling. Fort Worth, TX, May 14:*** **Seth Shai** and **Mace** won a four-way tag team match against **The Outlaws**, **SWAT**, and **Andy Dalton** and **Logan** to win the vacant tag team title. □

How does watching TNA from Orlando lead to a heavyweight title victory in Texas' Professional Championship Wrestling? Ask Steve DeMarco. He's the new PCW heavyweight champ.

the international report

By Mike Spillane

SINCE HE FIRST set the Lucha world on fire in the mid-1990s, **Rey Misterio Jr.** has been the wrestler by which all other aerial wrestlers are measured. Ever since Misterio made a name for himself in the United States, starting in ECW, quite a few fans have been keeping an eye on Mexican high-flyers, waiting to see the "next Rey Misterio Jr.," if there is ever to be such an entity. Around the turn of the millennium, CMLL standout **Ricky Marvin** seemed to be the heir apparent to the title of world's best high-flyer. He was a favorite not only of Lucha fans, but in Japan, his cult following earned him a spot in the 2000 Super J Cup Tournament hosted by Michinoku Pro. Marvin currently competes for NOAH in Japan, and still wrestles for CMLL back home in Mexico.

Tijuana's own **Extreme Tiger** became a buzz-worthy name about three years ago, when he first popped up on the scene. His trademark move, a 450 splash from the top turnbuckle to the floor onto a prone opponent, brought him attention all by itself. As tales of his daredevil antics spread, Extreme Tiger started to get mentioned in the same sentence as Misterio. However, if one man has taken over the lead in the race to become the best aerial wrestler active at the moment, it is most certainly **Mistico**.

Once a CMLL undercard wrestler known as **Astro Boy**, he transformed into the silver- and gold-clad Mistico in 2004 in time for the Gran Alternativa Tournament, an event at which rookies and veterans form new tag teams in an effort to elevate younger stars. Mistico was the breakout star of the tournament, and not long after it ended, he captured the NWA middleweight title. Having spent several months teaming with Mexico's biggest star, **El Hijo del Santo**, Mistico was affirmed in the eyes of the fans as the true next big thing.

Now Mistico has become one of Mexico's most in-demand attractions, and his matches are routinely at the tops of cards. His title defenses against the likes of **Averno** and **Ultimo Guerrero** have been called some of the best singles bouts in years by Mexican periodicals, and his mind-boggling high-risk moves have placed him in a category by himself. If he can avoid the types of injuries that have hampered other revolutionary high-flyers in their primes, Mistico could be poised to set more than just Mexico on fire with his breathtaking style.

Japan's short-lived Quadruple Crown, held by **Satoshi Kojima**, has already broken apart. **Hiroyoshi Tenzan** has recaptured the IWGP heavyweight title, separating it from All-Japan's Triple Crown (which Kojima still holds.) Prior to the title change in May, the two met in a pair of epic singles bouts, one in December and another in February. Tenzan spent some time cross-training in boxing to give him an offensive edge. It paid off, as he defeated his former tag team partner in probably the most important match of his career.

Hiroyoshi Tenzan had three IWGP title wins to his name as of the beginning of May, none of which was as nearly as important as his fourth—on May 14. He broke up what had been known for a few months as the Quadruple Crown.

Just a few months ago, **Mitsuharu Misawa**, **Tiger Emperor**, and **Yoshinari Ogawa** took a little tour of Europe, passing through Great Britain and Germany before returning to action with NOAH in Japan. They must have had a good time, because NOAH's top junior heavyweight is now poised to do the same. **Naomichi Marufuji** will be taking time off from the *puroresu*

scene for a short tour of Europe. Also visiting Europe in the summer months will be New Japan's **Minoru Suzuki**. This is in addition to a series of live shows New Japan will be presenting in Italy. In the 1980s, New Japan television programs drew terrific ratings in that nation, especially for matches featuring then-**Tiger Mask Satoru Sayama**. Two decades later, New Japan will hit the Italian market again, with events promoted heavily around the appearance of Sayama's protege, the fourth incarnation of Tiger Mask. The wrestling scene is beginning to bloom in Italy again; a recent independent card there headlined by **A.J. Styles** and **Petey Williams** drew a whopping 11,000 fans!

Carlito Caribbean Cool loved every left hand that he landed on the face of Roddy Piper at WrestleMania 21. He didn't have as much fun when Piper traveled to his native Puerto Rico ... and defeated him with the help of brass knuckles.

Continuing on the subject of Tiger Masks ... and Tiger Emperors ... and Extreme Tigers, there's yet another **Tiger** on the scene. The Tiger is none other than **Ultimo Dragon**, who pays homage to his wrestling hero, Tiger Mask, with his new persona (sometimes referred to as **Second Tiger** as well). However, Tiger hasn't proven to be too popular with promoters, as most want to advertise the name Ultimo Dragon, which is known the world over. In his own Toryumon X promotion in Mexico, Dragon can be Tiger whenever he wants to be, but in his other appearances, like with New Japan and CMLL in recent months, he has acquiesced and competed as Ultimo Dragon.

By the time you read this, Dragon will have launched Dragon Door, his new Japanese promotion that is undoubtedly designed to rival the Dragon Gate, a company made up of wrestlers that defected from his Toryumon a year ago. Dragon's Toryumon just celebrated its eighth anniversary with a show at Arena Mexico that featured Satoru Sayama back as Tiger Mask, and the man of the hour, Mistico. Also appearing on the diverse card were the likes of **Nidia**, **Linda "Shaniqua" Miles**, **Skayde**, and **"Super Porky" Brazo de Plata**.

International stars visiting the United States around press time included **Kendo Ka Shin**, the submission specialist who appeared as **Dragon Soldier B** a few months back for Ring of Honor. He's based in the Inoki Dojo in Los Angeles, at which he's training. From Japan's DDT promotion, **Shun the Kabuki Kid** was touring the East Coast, his third stop in the States. He was defeated by **Niles Young** in his first match in a promotion called NEXT. Toryumon X standout **Kanjuro Matsuyama** popped up at CHIKARA's anniversary shows in the month of May, and has also seen action with Pennsylvania-based Pro Wrestling Entertainment. *Joshi* star **Mariko Yoshida** recently appeared for a few events on the West Coast, confining her activity exclusively to California promotions.

On the same card, a collection of *puroresu* legends met in an unusual tag team match. **Tatsumi Fujinami** of New Japan and NOAH's Misawa joined forces to face **Masa Chono** and **Jushin Liger** (also of New Japan). Although Chono and Misawa had squared off in the past, this was the first time that Misawa and Liger were ever in the same ring. The match lasted about 15 minutes, with Fujinami getting the best of Liger in the end. The novelty of these interpromotional dream matches might be starting to wear off, however, as the box office power of each subsequent match seems to be waning.

The rivalry between **Roddy Piper** and **Carlito Colon** (a.k.a. **Carlito Caribbean Cool**), which began at WrestleMania 21 in the "Piper's Pit" segment that also featured **Steve Austin**, came to a head ... in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. Piper wrestled for **Carlos Colon's** World Wrestling Council, taking on the much younger Carlito (Carlos' son) in a singles match. The two expert trash-talkers settled their differences—more or less—when Piper used a pair of brass knuckles to knock out and then pin Carlito in the evening's main event. More than 2,000 fans turned out to see the two superstars duke it out. □

arena reports

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Spotlight Card of the Month

MILWAUKEE, WI—*WWE Velocity/Smackdown* tapings at the Bradley Center: **Scotty Too Hotty** defeated **C.M. Punk** ... **Billy Kidman** pinned **Shannon Moore** ... **The Basham Brothers** beat **Funaki** & **Nunzio** ... **Booker T** pinned **Quinson Valentino** ... U.S. champion **Orlando Jordan** beat **Mark Jindrak** ... Cruiserweight champion **Paul London** pinned **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** ... **Charlie Haas** & **Hardcore Holly** beat Smackdown tag team champions **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** by disqualification ... **The Big Show** pinned **Carlito Caribbean Cool** ... **Kurt Angle** defeated **Robert Fury** ... **Kurt Angle** won a battle royal, last eliminating **Rey Misterio Jr.**
(05-24-05)

—"Spotlight" photos by Gary Dineen

UNITED STATES

ARIZONA

TEMPE—Impact Zone Wrestling at The Sets: **Lawrence Tyler** defeated **Ryan Lynch** ... **Lucha Reigns** pinned **Payed Daly** ... **David Taylor** defeated **Adrenelyn** ... **Lawrence Tyler** beat **Peter Goodman** by disqualification ... **Navajo Warrior** & **Hawaiian Lion** beat **Flood** & **Mike James** ... Western States champion **Lil' Nate** beat **G.Q. Gallo** ... **Lawrence Tyler** defeated **Antonio Mestre** by submission.
(05-24-05)

—Edward K. Motley

ARKANSAS

BOONEVILLE—Traditional Championship Wrestling at the Fresh Water Church: Heavyweight champion **Matt Riviera** beat **Wes Jones** ... **Jimmy Candler** defeated **Frank Thornton** ... **Terry Pantera** defeated **Steve Anderson** ... **Bonzz** pinned **Tank McClain** ... **Wes Jones** & **Frank Thornton** beat **Matt Riviera** & **Jimmy Candler**.
(05-28-05)

—Boyd Bradford

BLYTHEVILLE—NWA Mid-South Wrestling at the National Guard Armory. **The Atomic Dogs** defeated **Big Daddy Fleetwood** & **Bone Crusher** ... Arkansas champ **Southside Brawler** beat **Pecos** ... **Ricky Murdoch** & **Big Bill Nasty** wrestled **Ice** & **JoNathan** to a double-disqualification ... **The Hambones** defeated **Man Mountain Mike** & **Nitro** ... **Titanic** defeated **Big Daddy Fleetwood** by countout ... **Wezsydez** defeated **Tank**.
(05-14-05)

—Mike Williams

DYER—Wrestling Revolutions Entertainment at the Community Center: **Rocky Gilmore** & **Jenivel** defeated **Brian Peaches** & **Tank McClain** for the U.S. tag title ... **Bonzz** beat **Anarchy** ... **Brian Peaches** beat North American heavyweight champ **Tank McClain** to win the title ... **Bonzz** beat junior heavyweight champion **Johnny Humphrey** to win the title ... U.S. champ **John Deaton** beat **Rocky Gilmore** ... Brass knuckles champ **Josh La Rue** beat **Kujo Li**.
(05-14-05)

—Randy Deaton

CALIFORNIA

SACRAMENTO—Supreme Pro Wrestling at St. Peter's Hall: **Seito Hayashi** won a battle royal ... **PH3** pinned **Confusion Chicano** ... **El Hijo de Chupacabra** pinned **Chupacabra II** ... **Malachi** won a four-way elimination match against **Mike Rayne**, **Jesus Kruze**, and **Otis** ... **Rik Luxury** & **Hans Mueller** beat **Steel** & **Bubba Blanchard** ... Heavyweight champ **Dante** pinned **Oliver John** ... **Dub C**, **DJ Rizz**, & **D-Unit** beat **J.D. Bishop**, **Vinny Massaro**, & **Tito Aquino** in a best-of-three-falls match ... **El Flaco Loco** pinned **Sir Samurai** in a no-disqualification match ... Extreme champ **Bonzai Bruce** won a three-way match against **Adam Thornstowe** and **Brian Raymond**.
(05-15-05)

—Tim Moura

SAN FRANCISCO—WWE at the Cow Palace: **Paul London** won a seven-man cruiserweight battle royal, last eliminating **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** ... **Heidenreich** pinned **Spike Dudley** ... **Matt Morgan** pinned **Funaki** ... **Kurt Angle** pinned **Booker T** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** defeated **Charlie Haas** & **Hardcore Holly** ... **Rey Misterio Jr.** defeated **Eddie Guerrero** by disqualification ... Smackdown champion **John Cena** defeated **John Bradshaw Layfield** & **Orlando Jordan** in a handicap match (**Roddy Piper** was the guest referee).
(05-14-05)

—John Samuel

LOS ANGELES—Pro Wrestling Guerrilla at the Hollywood-Los Feliz JCC: **El Generico** defeated **Human Tornado** ... **Ricky Reyes** beat **NOSAWA** ... **Scorpio Sky** & **Quicksilver** won a triple threat tag team match against **The Ballard Brothers** and **Hook Bomberry** & **Top Gun Talwar** ... **Kevin**

Why all the hostility toward Shannon Moore on Kidman's part? Perhaps he's just frustrated that he hasn't had much of note to do since feuding with Paul London last fall.

Steen beat **Sexxxy Eddie** ... **Excalibur** defeated **Super Dragon** in a guerrilla warfare match ... Tag team champions **Scott Lost** & **Chris Bosh** defeated **Disco Machine** & **Mr. Excitement** ... **A.J. Styles** and **Christopher Daniels** wrestled to a 60-minute time-limit draw.
(05-13-05)

—Jerica Dawson

COLORADO

COLORADO SPRINGS—WWE at World Arena: **Viscera** pinned **Robert Conway** ... **Matt Cappotelli** defeated **Tyson Tomko** ... **Romeo Roselli** & **Antonio Thomas** defeated **Rosey** & **Val Venis** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Steven Richards** ... **Edge** pinned **Chris Benoit** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** defeated **Muhammad Hassan** by disqualification ... **Christy Hemme** pinned **Victoria** ... **Chris Jericho** beat **Christian** ... Raw champion **Batista** pinned **Triple-H**.
(05-22-05)

—Patti Landry

LOVELAND—WWE at the Budweiser Events Center: Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** beat **Christian** ... **Romeo Roselli** & **Antonio Thomas** beat **Val Venis** & **Rosey** ... **Christy Hemme** pinned **Victoria** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Steven Richards** ... **Matt Cappotelli** pinned **Tyson Tomko** ... **Edge** beat **Chris Benoit** ... **Viscera** pinned **Robert Conway** ... **Muhammad Hassan** defeated **Chris Jericho** ... Raw champion **Batista** pinned **Triple-H** in a streetfight.
(05-21-05)

—Scott Tabor

FLORIDA

ORLANDO—TNA Slammiversary pay-per-view at Universal Studios: **Shark Boy** defeated **Zach Gowen**, **Elix Skipper**, **Delirious**, **The Amazing Red**, and **Jerrelle Clark** in a six-way match when he pinned Delirious ... **Shocker** pinned **Alex Shelley** ... **Ron Killings** pinned **The Outlaw** ... NWA tag team champions **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** defeated **Petey Williams** & **Eric Young** ... **Samoa Joe** beat **Sonjay Dutt** ... **Lance Hoyt** defeated **Bobby Rude** ... **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** beat **B.G. James** & **Konnan** ... TNA X champion **Christopher Daniels** defeated **Chris Sabin** and **Michael Shane** in a three-way match when he pinned Sabin ... **Raven** (replacing **Jeff Jarrett**) defeated NWA champion **A.J. Styles**, **Abyss**, **Monty Brown**, and **Sean Waltman** in a five-way "King Of The Mountain" match to win the title.
(06-19-05)

—Duane Long

ORLANDO—TNA Hard Justice pay-per-view at Universal Studios: **Petey Williams** & **Eric Young** defeated **Apolo** & **Sonny Siaki** ... **Michael Shane** & **Trinity** beat **Chris Sabin** & **Tracy Brooks** in a mixed tag team match ... **Raven** defeated **Sean Waltman** (substituting for **Jeff Hardy**) in a "Clockwork Orange House Of Fun" match ... **Monty Brown** & **The Outlaw** defeated **Ron Killings** & **Dallas Page** ... NWA tag team champions **Andy Douglas** & **Chase Stevens** defeated **Chris Harris** & **James Storm** ... TNA X champion **Christopher Daniels** pinned **Shocker** ... **Abyss** won a 20-man gauntlet match, last pinning **Ron Killings** ... **A.J. Styles** pinned NWA heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett** to win the title (**Tito Ortiz** was the guest referee).
(05-15-05)

—Harry Burkett

GEORGIA

SAVANNAH—Combat Fusion at the Alee Temple Arena: **Tower** defeated **Nick Hyper** & **Bain** by disqualification ... **Josh Rich** & **Kevin Cantrell** defeated **Cory Steele** & **Dexter Poindexter** ... **Dagon Briggs** defeated **Mark Stevens** ... **Bruce** & **Rod Steele** defeated **Frankie Capone** & **Xavier Night** ... **Erick Stevens** defeated **Vordell Walker** ... **Krazy K** defeated **Chasyn Rance**.
(05-21-05)

—Marianne Brennan

Funaki introduces Danny Basham's ugly mug to the canvas during a match that would air on *Velocity*. Moments later, both Bashams would introduce Funaki and Nunzio to a loss.

HARTWELL—IWA Flashfire at the Middle School Football Field: **Don Matthews** defeated **Phillip Pain** ... **Leatherface** beat **Infamous D** ... **Casey J** defeated **Draco** ... **Dale Dwindle** beat **James Boulevard** and **Lance Christopher** in a triple threat match ... **Tommy Sawyer** & **The Executioner** defeated **Donovan Cruze** & **Big Country**.
(05-13-05)

—Richard Burr

ILLINOIS

PEORIA—WWE at the Civic Center: Cruiserweight champion **Paul London** beat **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** ... **Mark Jindrak** defeated **Rene Dupree** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** defeated **Charlie Haas** & **Hardcore Holly** ... **Torrie Wilson** beat **Jackie Gayda** (**Funaki** was the guest referee) ... **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** defeated **Carlito Caribbean Cool** & **Matt Morgan** in a table match (**Tommy Dreamer** was the guest referee) ... **Eddie Guerrero** defeated **Scotty Too Hotty** ... **Booker T** beat **Kurt Angle** by disqualification ... Smackdown champion **John Cena** defeated **John Bradshaw Layfield** & **Orlando Jordan** in a handicap match.
(06-04-05)

—Jason Langin

PEORIA—FIST Wrestling at the Athlete Club: **Eddie Kingston** wrestled **Josh Abercombie** to a 15-minute draw ... **Tyler Black** pinned **Tony Scarpone** ... **Angelo Impell** & **Ryan Cruise** pinned **Sinnister** & **Russ Stevens** ... **Jimmy Jacobs** pinned **Ryan Phoenix** ... **Claudio Castagnoli** pinned **Mavek Brave** ... **Nigel McGuinness** pinned **Kyle Rich** ... **Shark Boy** pinned **Eddie Kingston** ... **Danny Daniels** & **Arik Cannon** defeated **Ryan Cruise** in a handicap match ... **The Black** & **The Brave** pinned **Tony Scarpone** & **Claudio Castagnoli** ... **Chris Hero** pinned **Josh Abercombie** ... **Jimmy Jacobs** pinned **Shark Boy** in a five-count match to win the FIST specialty trophy ... **Danny Daniels** & **Arik Cannon** beat **The Black** & **The Brave** to win the FIST tag trophy ... **Nigel McGuinness** beat **Chris Hero** in a best-of-three-falls match to win the FIST heavyweight trophy.
(05-29-05)

—Steven Lucas

CHICAGO RIDGE—Ring of Honor at the Frontier Fieldhouse: **James Gibson** defeated **B.J. Whitmer** ... **Matt Sydal** defeated **Matt Stryker**, **The Masked Green Bay Superstar**, and **Ace Steel** in a four-corners survival match ... **Chad Collyer** defeated **Jimmy Jacobs** ... **Homicide** beat **Doug Williams** ... **Roderick Strong** & **Jack Evans** defeated **Delirious** & **Alex Shelley** ... **Nigel McGuinness** defeated **Colt Cabana** ... ROH champion **Austin Aries** defeated **Bryan Danielson** ... **C.M. Punk** defeated **Jimmy Rave** in a steel cage match.
(05-14-05)

—Wayne McCarty

STREAMWOOD—NWA Midwest at the Community Center: **Marco Styles** defeated **Jason Reign** ... **Brad Bradley** defeated **Silas Young** ... **Eric Priest** & **Matt Longtime** defeated **Mike Venom** & **Danny Dominion** ... **Ryan Boz** beat **Chad Collyer** ... **MisChif** defeated women's champion **Daizee Haze** to win the title ... The three-way match between **Puma**, **Matt Sydal**, and **Delirious** ended in a 30-minute time-limit draw ... **The Black** & **The Brave** won a four-team elimination match against **The All Stars**, **Unusual Suspects**, and **B.J. Express** ... **Danny Daniels** defeated **Tracey Smothers**.
(05-07-05)

—Tom Hummel

INDIANA

TERRE HAUTE—Crossroad Championship Wrestling at Willy Jaks Willys Beach Club: **Colton Cash** defeated **Donovan Cain** ... **A.J. Powers** defeated **Everett** ... **Kyle Cadaver** & **T-Bone** won a three-way tag team match against **Andrew Coal** &

Despite having a decided edge in experience, Chavo Guerrero Jr. has not been able to wrest the WWE cruiserweight title from Paul London. This slingshot didn't do the trick.

Twizted and **Shawn Clarion** & **Xero** ... **Danielle Cash** defeated **Elektra Fine** ... Midwest champ **Jason Lyte** defeated **Toxik** by submission ... Heavyweight champ **Ray Lincoln** defeated **Dan Taylor** in a Sin City streetfight.
(05-20-05)

—Bobby Reidel

TERRE HAUTE—WWE at the Hulman Center: **Chris Jericho** & **Shelton Benjamin** beat **Muhammad Hassan** & **Khosrow Daivari** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Steven Richards** ... **Val Venis** beat **Bobby Lashley** ... **Christian** pinned **Viscera** ... **Christy Hemme** pinned **Victoria** ... Raw tag team champions **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** defeated **Romeo Roselli** & **Antonio Thomas** ... **Chris Benoit** beat **Tyson Tomko** ... **Kane** beat **Edge** by disqualification ... Raw champion **Batista** beat **Triple-H** & **Ric Flair** in a handicap match.
(05-14-05)

—Ed Handley

MADISON—AWA Supreme Championship Wrestling at the SCW Building: **William Valentine** beat **Mike Trusty** by submission ... Mid-America champion **Kliff Hanger** defeated **Robert Royale** by countout ... U.S. champion **Apollo** pinned **Live Wire** ... **Eric Draven** beat **Nick Noble** in a Texas death match.
(05-17-05)

—Shawn Sands

FORT WAYNE—WWE at the Memorial Coliseum: **Shelton Benjamin** & **Chris Jericho** defeated **Muhammad Hassan** & **Khosrow Daivari** ... **Bobby Lashley** beat **Val Venis** ... **Christy Hemme** pinned **Victoria** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Steven Richards** ... **Christian** beat **Viscera** ... Raw tag team champions **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** defeated **Romeo Roselli** & **Antonio Thomas** ... **Chris Benoit** defeated **Tyson Tomko** ... **Kane** beat **Edge** by disqualification ... Raw champion **Batista** beat **Ric Flair** & **Triple-H** in a handicap match.
(05-15-05)

—Nicholas Stevens

EVANSVILLE—WWE at Roberts Stadium: Raw tag team champions **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** defeated **Romeo Roselli** & **Antonio Thomas** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Steven Richards** ... **Bobby Lashley** pinned **Val Venis** ... **Christy Hemme** beat **Victoria** ... **Kane** pinned **Viscera** ... **Shelton Benjamin** & **Chris Jericho** beat **Muhammad Hassan** & **Khosrow Daivari** ... **Shawn Michaels** pinned **Christian** ... **Edge** defeated **Chris Benoit** ... Raw champion **Batista** beat **Triple-H** & **Ric Flair** in a handicap match.
(05-13-05)

—Anthony Davies

IOWA

DES MOINES—WWE at the Iowa Event Center: Cruiserweight champion **Paul London** defeated **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** ... **Mark Jindrak** beat **Rene Dupree** ... **Jackie Gayda** defeated **Torrie Wilson** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** beat **Charlie Haas** & **Hardcore Holly** ... **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** beat **Carlito Caribbean Cool** & **Matt Morgan** in a table match ... **Eddie Guerrero** defeated **Scotty Too Hotty** ... **Booker T** defeated **Kurt Angle** by disqualification ... Smackdown champion **John Cena** beat **John Bradshaw Layfield** & **Orlando Jordan** in a handicap match.
(06-05-05)

—Walter Mayfield

KENTUCKY

HODGERVILLE—Bad 2 The Bone Wrestling at LaRue County High School: **Max Misery** beat **Manslaughter** ... **Billy Black** defeated **Red Dragon** ... **Brandon Blaze** defeated **The Proffit** by reverse decision ... **Dynamite Derreck** beat **K-Lo** by disqualification ... **J.C. Bailey** & **Randy** & **Steve Johnson** beat **Simon Sezz**, **Shane Matthews**, & **Dan Ramone**.
(05-22-05)

—Joe Bailey

MASSACHUSETTS

BRAINTREE—Jersey All Pro Wrestling at the Armory: Light heavyweight champion **Azrieal** defeated **Nino Capone** ... **Samoa Joe** defeated **Eric Cooper** ... **B-Boy** defeated **Sexxy Eddy** ... **Beef Wellington** defeated **Pinky Sanchez** ... **Cess 69** defeated **Eric Cooper** ... Light heavyweight champion **Azrieal** defeated **El Generico** ... Tag team champions **Teddy Hart** & **Jack Evans** defeated **The H Effect** ... **Jay Lethal** won a four-way match against **Samoa Joe**, **Kevin Steen**, and **Homicide** for the heavyweight championship.
(05-21-05)

—Dan Lamar

FRAMINGHAM—New England Championship Wrestling at the Civic League: **Afterburn**, **Bryce Andrews**, & **Frankie Arion** defeated **D-Unit** ... **Natalia** defeated **Mercedes Martinez** ... Tag team champions **Zack Statick** & **Kristian Frost** defeated **Fred Curry Jr.** & **Pat Masters** ... **D.C. Dillinger** and **Brian Nunes** wrestled to a no-contest ... **Joe Chece** defeated TV champ **Ru Starr** to win the title ... **Paul Lombardi** defeated **Sonny Goodspeed** ... **Mike Bennett** defeated **Michael Sain** in a last-man-standing match ... **Tony Montana** defeated **Danny Diaz** ... Heavyweight champion **Chris Venom** wrestled **Alex Arion** to a 30-minute draw.
(05-14-05)

—Chuck Russel

MINNESOTA

MINNEAPOLIS—WWE Judgment Day pay-per-view at the Target Center: Smackdown tag team champions **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** defeated **Charlie Haas** & **Hardcore Holly** ... **Carlito Caribbean Cool** pinned **The Big Show** after **Matt Morgan** interfered ... Cruiserweight champion **Paul London** pinned **Chavo Guerrero Jr.** ... **Booker T** pinned **Kurt Angle** ... U.S. champion **Orlando Jordan** pinned **Heidenreich** ... **Rey Misterio Jr.** defeated **Eddie Guerrero** by disqualification ... Smackdown champion **John Cena** beat **John Bradshaw Layfield** in an "I Quit" match.
(05-22-05)

—Charlie Reilly

MISSOURI

GERALD—Midwest Powerhouse Wrestling at the Lost Valley Lake Resort: Hardcore champion **Napalm** won a four-corners match against **Ivan Stroganov**, **Dan Walsh**, and **Guy Smith** ... **Rick Ruby** beat **Curtis Payne** ... **Ninja Presley** beat **Xavier Frost** in a karaoke/kendo stick match ... **Chico Es Loco** pinned **Brian James** ... Women's champion **Jaden** pinned **Ivana** ... Heavyweight champion **The Searcher** beat **Scar**.
(05-28-05)

—Chip Leffler

MARYLAND HEIGHTS—Gateway Championship Wrestling at the UMB Bank Pavilion: **Chaz Wesson** & **Staunton** beat **Jimmy Charisma** & **Melvin Talent** ... Light heavyweight champion **Jynx** beat **Jackal** ... Heavyweight champion **Kory Twist** beat **Trent Stone** ... **Steven Kennedy** beat **Michael Serious** ... **Dingo** beat **Cameron Cage** ... **Kevin X** beat **Trent Stone** ... **Dingo** beat **Steven Kennedy** ... Heavyweight champion **Kory Twist** beat **Outtkast** ... Light heavyweight champion **Jynx** won a four-corners match also involving **Michael Serious**, **Jackal**, and **Sean Vincent** ... **Kevin X** beat **Shorty Biggs** ... **Cabal** & **Rat Boy** beat **The Super Castaldis** ... **Dingo** beat light heavyweight champion **Jynx** in a non-title match ... **Rebecca Raze** beat **Jackal** ... **Chaz Wesson** beat **Steven Kennedy** ... **Trent Stone** & **Michael Serious** beat **D.N.S.** ... **Shorty Biggs** beat **Rat Boy** ... **Rebecca Raze** beat **Sean Vincent** ... Heavyweight champion **Kory Twist** beat **Cameron Cage** ... **Dingo** beat **Chaz Wesson** in a TLC match ... **Jackal** beat **Richard Head** ... **Shorty Biggs** beat **Steven Kennedy** ... **Kevin X** beat **Michael Serious** ... **Kory Twist** & **Jynx** won a three-way tag team dance with **D.N.S.** and **Sean Vincent** & **Richard Head**.
(05-15-05)

—Patrick Brandmeyer

NEW JERSEY

WEST PATERSON—Independent Wrestling Federation at the IWF Center: Tag team champions **Kevin Knight** & **Dan McGuire** wrestled **Fred Sampson** & **Shane O'Brien** to a double-countout ... Junior heavyweight champion **Sean Royal** defeated **Tommy Penmanship** ... **Tony Torres** & **Antonio Rivera** defeated **Biggie Biggs** & **Aaron Stride** ... **Damian Adams** defeated **Travis Blake** ... **Damian Adams** won a 16-man Royal Rumble.
(05-22-05)

—Dorothy Podsvirow

BLOOMFIELD—National Wrestling Superstars at Essex Manor: **Jay Santana** defeated **Brawley** ... **Gavin Quest** defeated **Gil Quest** ... **Dan Petit** won a three-way match against **Dan Barry** and **Nicky Oceans** ... **TNT** defeated **Hasheem Ali** by disqualification ... **Tito Santana** pinned **Kevin Knight** ... **Bison Bravado** & **Danny Damanto** defeated **Little Romeo** & **Chris Sandel** ... Junior heavyweight champion **Tony Flow** beat **Damian Adams** ... **Vicious Vin** defeated regional heavyweight champion **Saddam Insane** to win the title.
(05-14-05)

—Myke Felice

NEW YORK

NEW YORK—WWE's ECW One Night Stand pay-per-view at the Hammerstein Ballroom: **Lance Storm** pinned **Chris Jericho** ... **Super Crazy** defeated **Little Guido** and **Yoshihiro Tajiri** in a three-way elimination match ... **Rey Misterio Jr.** pinned **Psicosis** ... **Sabu** pinned **Rhyno** ... **Chris Benoit** defeated **Eddie Guerrero** by submission ... **Mike Awesome** pinned **Masato Tanaka** ... **Buh Buh Ray** & **D-Von Dudley** defeated **Tommy Dreamer** & **The Sandman**.
(06-12-05)

—George Napolitano

AMSTERDAM—World of Hurt Wrestling at the St. Mary's Institute: **Miss DeVille** defeated **Barbie** ... Tag team champions **Swinger Sidusky** & **Reed James** defeated **Virus** & **Shane Alden** ... **Shockwave** defeated **Bobby Flamingo** ... **Jimmy Jact Cash** defeated **Steve Kruz** ... **Jim Tanner** won a three-way match against **Vendetta** and **Punk** to win the hardcore title ... **Scott Campione** defeated **Chris Steele** ... **Danger** & **Jeff Starr** defeated **Nick Neighborhood** & **Chuck Deep** ... **J.P. Black** defeated **Vik Dalishus** ... **King Kong Bundy** & **The Patriot** defeated **Texas Outlaw** & **King Kahlua** ... **Hoss** won a battle royal.
(05-20-05)

—Thom Chambliss

IRONDEQUOIT—NWA Upstate at the All Star Sports Arena: **Chip Stetson** won a 20-man battle royal ... **Cheech** & **Cloudy** defeated **Jerk Jackson** & **Freddie Midnight** ... **Eric Everlast** defeated **Steve Kruz** ... **Triple X** wrestled No Limits champion **Kevin Dunn** to a no-contest when **Petey Williams** ran in and attacked both men ... **Petey Williams** defeated No Limits champ **Kevin Dunn** to win the title ... **Alere Littlefeather** defeated **Miss DeVille** ... **Jason Atlas** defeated **Evan McCloud** ... **Mastiff**, **Randy Walker**, & **Gutter** defeated six-man tag team champions **Triple X**, **Spazz**, & **Psykita** ... **Charisma**, **Gabe Saint**, & **Kid Justice** defeated **Chip Stetson**, **Mean Marcos**, & **J.P. Black** ... Kayfabe dojo champion **Jake N' Bake** defeated **D To The Icky** ... **The Outcast Killaz** defeated tag team champions **The Olsen Twins** to win the title ... **Big Cat** defeated **Mr. Derek Allen** in a bodyslam challenge ... Heavyweight champion **Glenn Spectre** defeated **Brodie Lee**.
(05-14-05)

—Todd Brantley

NORTH CAROLINA

MOUNT AIRY—AIWF at the Armory: **Jason Blade** defeated **The Scorpion** ... **The War Machines** defeated **Brett Mulligan** & **Chris Dice** ... **Luscious Kevin** wrestled **Steve the Stud Muffin** to a no-contest ... **The Stalker** & **Canabus** wrestled **Terminator X** & **Gemini** to a no-contest ... **Big Country** & **Major Havoc** defeated **Death** & **War** ... Heavyweight champ **Robert Roma** defeated **Timber**.
(05-28-05)

—David Webb

HAMLET—World Class Extreme Wrestling at the Armory: **Tito Rain** won a three-way match against **Steve Michaels** and **Kidd Evil** ... **James Reno** defeated **Tre G** ... **Robert Sheryll** defeated **Slick** in a special challenge match ... **Zane Dawson** defeated **Dr. Love** in a "pink-slip-on-a-pole" match. According to a prematch stipulation, Love is now banned from WCEW for a period of 120 days ... Tag team champs **East Coast Bodily Harm** beat **Aaron Devil** & **Kidd Evil** ... **Tyrone Knox** wrestled **Steve Michaels** to a 10-minute draw ... **DJ P-Roc** defeated **Ali Steele** to become the new heavyweight champion.
(05-21-05)

—Jeanne Patton

STATESVILLE—Carolina Wrestling Association at the Grace Park Center: **Major Pain** & **Scottie Brooks** defeated **Chris Nelson** & **Ian Daniels** ... **George South Sr.** defeated **Jesse Morris** ... **Mike Lee** defeated **Jimmy Jack Funk Jr.** to win the vacant Intercontinental title ... **Jake Manning** & **Diablo Rojo** defeated **Homies With Attitude** ... Heavyweight champion **George South Jr.** defeated **Jason Jones**.
(05-21-05)

—Michael Carpenter

RAMSEUR—Tarheel Wrestling Entertainment at the Eastern Randolph High School: **Louis Moore** beat **Fanatic** ... **Jason Machado** wrestled **Sacro Jr.** to a double-disqualification ... **Capital Punishment** beat **Method 187** ... **Ouga Booga** pinned **L.A. WildOne** ... **Trent Wylde** beat **Joey Silva** ... **Persephone** defeated **Shellie Starr** ... **Scrap Yard Dog** pinned TV champion **Jose Sanchez** to win the title ... **Too Hott** won a triangle tag team match against **Thugged Out Pimps** and tag team champions **Damage Inc.** to win the title ... **Barbarian** defeated **Bounty Hunter** by disqualification ... Heavyweight champion **Lodi** pinned **Scotty Mathews**.
(05-14-05)

—Alex Baucus

OHIO

DAYTON—WWE at Hara Arena: **Viscera** pinned **Robert Conway** ... Raw tag team champions **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** defeated **Simon Dean** & **Maven** ... **Chris Masters** beat **Tajiri** ... **Christy Hemme** pinned **Victoria** ... **Bobby Lashley** pinned **Val Venis** ... **Chris Benoit** defeated **Edge** in a table match ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Christian** ... **Muhammad Hassan** defeated **Chris Jericho** ... Raw champion **Batista** pinned **Triple-H** in a streetfight.
(06-04-05)

—Kimberly Francis

OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA CITY—Northeast Wrestling/Impact Zone Wrestling at Stage Center: **Dexter Hardaway** defeated **Dan Cross** ... Heavyweight champion **Aaron Neil** defeated **Christopher Matthews** ... Impact division champion **Tyler Bateman** defeated **Brad Michaels** ... **Al Snow** defeated **Trevor Rhodes** ... **Brandon Groom** defeated **Superstar Steve** ... **Jerry Lawler** defeated **Rodney Mack**.
(05-13-05)

—Mike Iles

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA—Shane Douglas' Hardcore Homecoming at the ECW Arena: **Chris Chetti** & **Mikey Whipwreck** defeated **C.W. Anderson** & **Simon Diamond** ... **Tracey Smothers** pinned **The Blue Meanie** ... **2 Cold Scorpio** pinned **Kid Kash** ... **John Kronus** & **New Jack** wrestled to a no-contest with **Ian** & **Axl Rotten** ... **Jerry Lynn** pinned **Justin Credible** ... **Raven** pinned **The Sandman**

Johnny Nitro looks like he's borrowing from the playbook of Muhammad Hassan as he applies a modified camel clutch on Charlie Haas. It must be working for him. M-N-M is the hottest tag team in WWE by far.

Matt Morgan didn't appreciate The Big Show's decisive win over Carlito and opted to F5 the big man through a table. With Carlito being drafted by Raw, Morgan is now on his own as he battles Show.

... **Terry Funk** defeated **Shane Douglas** and **Sabu** in a three-way barbed-wire match.
(06-10-05)

—John Harper

PHILADELPHIA—3PW at the ECW Arena: **Kris Krude** defeated **Dru Blood** ... **Teddy Fine** defeated **Ron Zombie** ... **Josh Daniels** defeated **Devon Moore** ... **Steve Mack** & **Damian Adams** defeated **Dirk Ciglar** & **Sterling James Keenan** ... **C.J. O'Doyle** defeated **Greg Spitz** ... **Blackball'd** won a tag team gauntlet match to win the tag team title ... **Abyss** defeated **Messiah** in a fans-bring-the-weapons match ... **Chris Sabin** defeated **James Storm** ... **Roadkill** won a three-way match against **Simon Diamond** and **Slyck Wagner Brown** to capture the heavyweight championship.
(05-21-05)

—Emma Bingaman

PHILADELPHIA—Combat Zone Wrestling at the ECW Arena: ***Best of the Best Tournament, quarterfinals:*** **Super Dragon** defeated **Chris Bosh** ... **El Generico** beat **Excalibur** ... **Chris Hero** beat **Brandon Thomaselli** ... **Kevin Steen** defeated **Kenny the Bastard** ... **Mike Quackenbush** defeated **Arik Cannon** ... **Claudio Castagnoli** beat **Derek Frazier** ... **B-Boy** defeated **Sabian** ... **Ebessan** defeated **Nate Webb** ... ***Semifinals:*** Dragon defeated Generico ... Steen beat Hero ... Quackenbush defeated Castagnoli ... B-Boy defeated Ebessan ... ***Finals:*** Quackenbush defeated Dragon, Steen, and B-Boy in a four-way match to win the tournament ... ***In non-tournament matches:*** **The H8 Club** defeated **D.J. Hyde** & **Toby Klein** ... **Sexxxy Eddy** & **Nate Webb** defeated **Ruckus** & **Eddie Kingston**.
(05-14-05)

—Bill Lindsay

McKEESPORT—NWA Pro Wrestling Express at the Sportatorium: **Jason Cage** won a three-way match against **Tony Mann** and **Catastrophe** ... **Dash Bennett** & **Sean Dahmer** defeated **Eisen Drache** & **Dan Miles** ... **Kano Carter** pinned **Cornbread** ... Heavyweight champion **Devin Devine** beat **Spyral** ... **The Tri Chi Fraternity** defeated **Adam Cage** & **Sabotage** ... Tag team champions **Da Munchies** defeated **The Super Duper Cool Dudes** ... Brass knuckles champion **Tyrone Evans** beat **Scott Venom** in a no-disqualification match ... **Crusher Hansen** defeated **Brandon K** by countout ... **Nikita Allanov** defeated Three Rivers champion **Chris Taylor** in a ladder match to win the title.
(05-28-05)

—Fran Martinez

PITTSTON—CHIKARA at The Staircase: **Equinox**, **USApe**, & **The Kabuki Kid** defeated **UltraMantis Black**, **Hallowicked**, & **Rorschach** ... **Crossbones** & **Mano Metalico** defeated **Davey Andrews** & **Shane Hagadorn** ... **Shane Storm** pinned **Dr. Cheung** ... **Matt Turner** & **Anthony Franco** wrestled to a no-contest with **Cheech** & **Cloudy** ... **Nebula** pinned **Jigsaw** ... **Claudio Castagnoli** & **Arik Cannon** defeated **Lance Steel** & **Jolly Roger** ... **Skayde** pinned **Kanjuro Matsuyama** ... **Chris Hero** beat **Mike Quackenbush**.
(05-22-05)

—Joe Vincent

EMMAUS—CHIKARA at the Fire Company: **Hallowicked** pinned **Equinox** ... **Rorschach** beat **Private Eye** ... **Shane Hagadorn** defeated **Matt Turner** ... **Dr. Cheung** defeated **Andy Sumner** ... **Skayde** & **Kanjuro Matsuyama** beat **Lance Steel** & **Jolly Roger** ... **Icarus** defeated **Nebula** ... **Shane Storm** pinned **UltraMantis Black** ... **Mike Quackenbush**, **Reckless Youth**, & **Jigsaw** defeated **Chris Hero**, **Claudio Castagnoli**, & **Arik Cannon**.
(05-21-05)

—Joe Vincent

SOUTH CAROLINA

LANCASTER—Exodus Wrestling Alliance at the American Legion Building: **Brad Thomas** beat **Jason Jones** ... **Ethan Cage** & **Jimmy Jack Funk Jr.** beat **Canadian Bulldog** & **Greg Armstrong** ... **Andy Chavis** & **Shane Austin** beat **Super Ninja** & **J.T. Flip** ... **Krissy Vaine** beat **Amber O'Neal** ... **Rick Morton** beat heavyweight champ **George South Sr.** to win the title.
(05-27-05)

—Dan Parris & Michael Carpenter

TENNESSEE

HUNTSVILLE—Southern Wrestling Alliance at the Scott High School: ***In a tournament to crown a number-one contender to the heavyweight title, quarterfinal matches:*** **The Omen** pinned **Jason Fear** ... **Eric Adamz** pinned **Brad Thomas** ... ***Semifinals:*** **Jack Diamond** pinned Omen ... Adamz pinned **Edward Idol** ... ***Finals:*** Adamz pinned Diamond to win the tournament ... ***Non-tournament match:*** **Rick Morton** & **Tracey Smothers** defeated **Bobby Eaton** & **Dennis Condrey** in a Tennessee streetfight.
(05-28-05)

—Paul Ledbetter

KINGSPORT—Championship Wrestling at the National Guard Armory: **Steve Fury** won a battle royal ... **Alyx Winters** defeated National heavyweight champ **Dr. Tom Prichard** in a falls-count-anywhere match to win the title ... **Shane Williams** defeated **Rich Kavana** ... **Nick Hammonds** vs. **Wayne Adkins** was declared a no-contest ... **Tony Givens** beat TV champion **Thorn** to win the title ... Triple Crown tag team champions **Beau James** & **K.C. Thunder** defeated **Tony Givens** & **Robbie Cassidy** ... NWA heavyweight champion **A.J. Styles** defeated **Josh Cody**.
(05-28-05)

—Frank Miller

TEXAS

GLADEWATER—New Age Wrestling Alliance at the Wallace Arena: **Sean Cordova** beat **Joey Corman** by disqualification ... **Ricky Roberts** & **Trey Washington** beat **Khan** & **Andy Dalton** ... **Max Lavarro** beat **Texas Red** by disqualification ... **Robert Evans** beat **Angel of Sin** by disqualification ... **Jason Skyy** & **Mongoose** beat **Logan** & **Pendragon** to win the tag team title ... **Sean Cordova** & **Angel of Sin** beat **The Overboyz**.
(05-29-05)

—John Larance

ARLINGTON—Professional Championship Wrestling at the PCW Arena: **Jeff Brown** beat **Stephen Murphy** in a handcuff match ... **Apocalypse** beat **Tim Storm** ... **Jerry Brown** beat **Young Pioneer Eagle** ... Cruiserweight champion **Robert Evans** beat **Claudia** ... **Shadow** beat **Kevin Paine** in a coal miner's glove match.
(05-28-05)

—Rob Moore

DENTON—Xtreme Championship Wrestling at the XCW Arena: **Khan** beat **Spudz McKenzie** ... Ironman champion **Dusty Wolfe** beat **Dave the Rave** ... **Bull** and **Drunk Adam** wrestled to a no-contest ... **Al Jackson** & **Hugh Rogue** beat **Gemini** & **Sidd Murder** ... Heavyweight champion **Brett Barnes** beat **Action Jackson** by disqualification.
(05-20-05)

—Matt Avery

FORT WORTH—New Generation Wrestling at the Fire Station Community Center: **Joey Corman** & **David Fuller** beat **Texas Red** & **Dick Loin** ... **Pendragon** defeated **Angel of Sin** ... **Seth Shai** & **Mace** won a four-way tag team match against **The Outlaws**, **Swat**, and **Andy Dalton** & **Logan** to win the vacant tag team title ... **Blade** & **Larry Green** beat **The Unnaturals** ... **KYB** defeated **Rock Bannon**.
(05-14-05)

—Sunni Fowler

VIRGINIA

SHAWSVILLE—Bruiser Wrestling Federation at the Middle School: **Chris Collins** won a six-way match over **J-Synn**, **Psiris**, **Baha**, **Ravage Lee**, and **Kamikaze Kid** ... **Gregory Vercetti** beat **Ultra Dragon** ... **Shawn Christian** pinned **Donnie Green** ... **K.C. the Clown** defeated **Bad News Johnson** ... **The Starliners** defeated **Tony Fritz** & **B.J. Shooter** ... **Frank Parker** pinned **Scotty Rocker** ... **Bruiser Graham** won a battle royal, last eliminating **Matty Dee**.
(05-07-05)

—Troy Loveday

WASHINGTON

TACOMA—WWE at the Tacoma Dome: **Viscera** pinned **Tyson Tomko** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Tajiri** ... Raw tag team champions **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** defeated **Romeo Roselli** & **Antonio Thomas** and **Simon Dean** & **Maven** in a three-way match ... **Christy Hemme** pinned **Victoria** ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Christian** ... **Chris Benoit** defeated **Gene Snitsky** in a hardcore match ... **Edge** pinned **Kane** ... **Chris Jericho** defeated **Muhammad Hassan** ... Raw champion **Batista** defeated **Triple-H** & **Ric Flair** in a handicap match.
(05-27-05)

—George Flanigan

WEST VIRGINIA

HUNTINGTON—WWE at the Big Sandy Superstore Arena: **Viscera** pinned **Robert Conway** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Tajiri** ... Raw tag team champions **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** beat **Simon Dean** & **Maven** ... **Christy Hemme** defeated **Victoria** ... **Chris Benoit** beat **Gene Snitsky** in a table match ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** defeated **Christian** ... **Muhammad Hassan** pinned **Chris Jericho** ... **Edge** defeated **Kane** ... Raw champion **Batista** pinned **Triple-H**.
(06-03-05)

—Ian Sanders

CHARLESTON—Northwind Championship Wrestling at Fun Park: **James Jackson** defeated **Tiny** ... **Saint Goodfella** wrestled **Mr. USA** to a time-limit draw ... **Terry Alan** wrestled **Kid Warrior** to a double-countout ... **High Voltage** defeated **The Flamingo Brothers** ... **Kodiak** defeated **Dynamite Kid** (not the original).
(05-18-05)

—Ally Hudson

NITRO—XMCW at the Community Center: **Kris King** defeated heavyweight champion **Shane Storm** by disqualification ... **Chris Kahn** defeated **El Fandango** ... **Wes the Best** beat **T-Bone** ... **Phil Stamper** defeated **Chad Cross** by disqualification ... **Escalade** defeated **Vance Desmond** ... **Nina** defeated **Booty X** ... **Zac Vincent** defeated **Cole Cash** ... **The Lynch Boys** defeated **Raw Talent** & **T-Bone** ... Hardcore champion **The Unholy** defeated **Ricky Villain** and **Dallas Michaels** in a three-way dance ... **Shark Boy** & **Kris King** defeated **Mister X** & **Shane Storm** ... **Phil Anderson** defeated **Chad Cross** ... Tag team champs **Rated X** defeated **Eric Steel** & **Brett Sharp** ... **Shark Boy** defeated **Mister X** ... **Kris King** defeated **Shane Storm** to become the new heavyweight champion.
(05-14-05)

—Monty Combs

WISCONSIN

BATAVIA—Powerhouse Pro Wrestling at the Scott Community Center: **Ninja Assassins** beat **Beach Bums** ... **Baby Haystacks** beat **Stryker Brothers** & **Money Mike** in a no-disqualification handicap match ... **Stalker** beat **Dez Kandina** ... **Jesse Weaver** beat **Jazon Parrxz** ... **Steve Storm** defeated **Funky C** ... **Blue Jabroni** & **Jesse Weaver** beat **Jazon Parrxz** & **Frank Fox** ... **Jazon Parrxz** defeated **Krazy Gorman** ... **Bruce Allen** beat **Sgt. Harris** in a pink slip match.
(05-14-05)

—Nicholas Loken

INTERNATIONAL

CANADA

GRANDE PRAIRIE, ALBERTA—WWE at the Crystal Centre: Smackdown tag team champions **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** defeated **Charlie Haas** & **Hardcore Holly** ... U.S. champion **Orlando Jordan** defeated **Scotty Too Hotty** ... **Heidenreich** pinned **Rene Dupree** ... **Paul London** won a cruiserweight battle royal ... **Torrie Wilson** pinned **Michelle McCool** ... **The Big Show** defeated **Carlito Caribbean Cool** & **Matt Morgan** in a handicap match ... Smackdown champion **John Cena** defeated **Kurt Angle** in a steel cage match.
(05-29-05)

—Dutch Krewda

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA—WWE at the Save-on-Foods Memorial Arena: **Viscera** defeated **Tyson Tomko** ... Raw tag team champions **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** defeated **Romeo Roselli** & **Antonio Thomas** and **Simon Dean** & **Maven** in a three-way match ... **Chris Masters** beat **Tajiri** ... **Christy Hemme** pinned **Victoria** ... **Chris Benoit** pinned **Gene Snitsky** in a hardcore match ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** defeated **Christian** ... **Edge** beat **Kane** ... **Chris Jericho** defeated **Muhammad Hassan** ... Raw champion **Batista** beat **Triple-H** & **Ric Flair** in a handicap match.
(05-29-05)

—Doug Fravell

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA—WWE at the PNE Agrodome: **Viscera** beat **Tyson Tomko** ... **Chris Masters** defeated **Tajiri** ... Raw tag team champions **The Hurricane** & **Rosey** defeated **Romeo Roselli** & **Antonio Thomas** and **Simon Dean** & **Maven** in a three-way match ... **Christy Hemme** pinned **Victoria** ... **Chris Benoit** beat **Gene Snitsky** in a hardcore match ... Intercontinental champion **Shelton Benjamin** pinned **Christian** ... **Edge** pinned **Kane** ... **Chris Jericho** defeated **Muhammad Hassan** ... Raw champion **Batista** beat **Ric Flair** & **Triple-H** in a handicap match.
(05-28-05)

—Jeff McCann

WINNIPEG, MANITOBA—WWE at the MTS Centre: **Paul London** won a cruiserweight battle royal ... **Heidenreich** pinned **Rene Dupree** ... Smackdown tag team champions **Joey Mercury** & **Johnny Nitro** beat **Charlie Haas** & **Hardcore Holly** ... **Scotty Too Hotty** pinned **Akio** ... U.S. champion **Orlando Jordan** pinned **Rey Misterio Jr.** ... **Torrie Wilson** pinned **Michelle McCool** ... **The Big Show** beat **Matt Morgan** & **Carlito Caribbean Cool** in a handicap match ... Smackdown champion **John Cena** defeated **Kurt Angle** in a steel cage match.
(05-28-05)

—Anthony Weekes

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA—Mainstream Wrestling at the Dome: **Julian Spades** beat **Kronica** ... **Maritime Menace** defeated **Dice** by submission ... **Paco Loco** pinned **Trash Canyon** ... **Jason Holliday** beat **Roman Kable** by disqualification ... Atlantic Canadian champion **Kyle Kruze** defeated **Outcast** in a ladder match.
(05-26-05)

—Malcolm Brown

QUEBEC CITY, QUEBEC—Elite Wrestling Revolution at the Horizon Centre: **El Generico** pinned **Damian** ... Tag team champs **Reality Check** beat **2.0**, **Los Tabarnacos**, and **L'Academie de Lutte** in a four-way scramble match ... **Dave Silva** beat **The Arsenal** ... **Kona**, **Jake Matthews**, & **Vanessa Kraven** beat **Fred la Merveille**, **Pee-Wee**, & **Jack-a-Lidster** ... **Hell Storm** beat **Damian Steele** ... **Excess** beat heavyweight champion **Petey Williams** to win the title ... **A.J. Styles** beat **Kevin Steen** in a best-of-three-falls match.
(05-07-05)

—Patrick Mercier

IRELAND

MALONE—Ulster Championship Wrestling at the Rugby Club: **JDP** & **Vice** beat **El Torro Sanchez** & **Takahiro Fujinami** ... Cruiserweight champion **Joey Blazye** beat **Rodd** ... **Bobby Lee Harm** beat **Mick Flair** ... **Bobby Lee Harm** beat hardcore champion **Johnny Cage** ... **Bobby Lee Harm** beat **Darren Thompson** ... **Frankie Fever** beat **Shawn Scott** by disqualification ... **The Machine** beat **Dunkan Disorderly** to win the vacant heavyweight championship.
(05-27-05)

—Alan Anderson

We're tempted to question Kurt Angle's decision to use an anklelock on Rey Misterio Jr. as he attempted to win a battle royal, but his strategy worked. He eliminated Rey to win the event.

PWI classic

From the February 1978 issue of *Inside Wrestling*

HOW THIS CHILD WILL MAKE ANDRE CHAMPION

The Bible says a little child shall lead. This may be a prophecy for Andre the Giant, whose "adviser" is only five years old. This young genius envisions wrestling strategies guaranteed to make Andre champion!

THE SMALL BOY sat on a chair in the corner of the dressing room. To an unknowing observer, he might have appeared to have been asleep. His eyes were closed, his body seemed completely relaxed. But to those who knew what was happening, it was clear this lad was doing anything but sleeping.

In the arena itself, Andre the Giant was wrestling a ruthless rulebreaker. But the man's tactics did not bother Andre; he knew exactly what to do. In very little time, Andre had completely vanquished his opponent. He had done it brilliantly, one must add. He had used a predetermined strategy and it had worked.

Back in the dressing room, the boy came out of his pose. He had not been sleeping; he had been in intense concentration. He was using his time to devise strategy for Andre the Giant's next match!

This small boy is someone very special.

Just to hear him speak, you know you are in the presence of a genius. There is no qualification to that; he is a genius. He knows his subject thor-

You wouldn't think strategy would be important for a man of Andre's size. Just wind up, pound away, and win. But he needed to do more if he was to win an elusive world title. One brilliant five-year-old, he found out, could help.

oughly. He has been studied by leading scholars at major universities; they want to know how he can be so brilliant.

By now, every wrestler in the sport has heard about this child prodigy (for legal reasons, his name cannot be printed). He has proven his genius when it comes to devising complex wrestling strategies. In fact, it is reputed that he has so clear an understanding of the sport, he can be compared to the most accomplished of veterans for his knowledge. And he is only five years old!

Every wrestler in the sport would like to have access to this child's knowledge. However, only one man does—Andre the Giant.

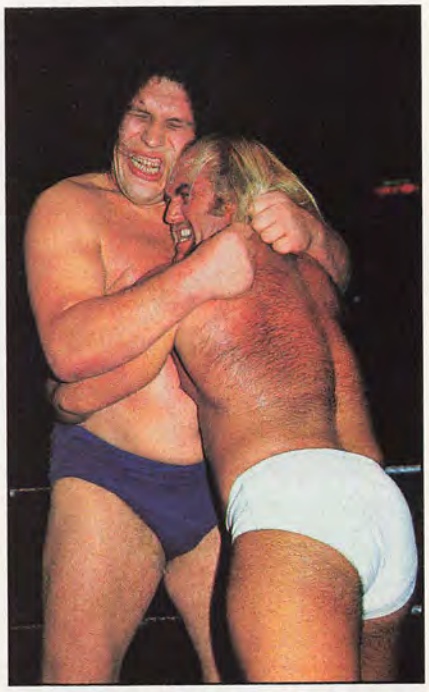
For several months now, Andre has been listening to the advice given to him by this five-year-old wrestling genius. And there has been a marked improvement in the way he has been wrestling. Can this be attributed to the child prodigy? No one will either confirm or deny this in public. However, this boy may hold the key to Andre's future.

One wrestler, a friend of Andre who asked not to be identified in print, said, "There is no doubt that the boy has made a big difference in the way Andre wrestles. Andre was very good before. Now he is unbeatable. It is clear that this boy was the best thing that ever happened to Andre. I expect Andre will soon be a world champion. He'll owe his success to this boy."

Every field of endeavor has had its prodigies. Music had Mozart and Beethoven. Chess has Bobby Fischer. Physics had Einstein. Literature had Arthur Rimbaud and Carson McCullers. Now wrestling has this young lad. He will someday earn a place of honor in the annals of wrestling history. Of course, his success is directly linked to Andre's success. If the boy can lead the wrestler to a title, he will be appropriately honored. It would be only a small gesture toward what he deserves.

Many wrestlers envy Andre this small boy. After all, the child will only devise his strategies for Andre. No other wrestler has been given the benefit of his wisdom. This is because the boy was, is, and always will be an Andre the Giant fan. Indeed, that is how this unlikely pair got together in the first place.

The boy's father works at the



Even Hulk Hogan gave up a lot of size to Andre in the late-1970s. But he could match a lot of his power. This mysterious five-year-old genius gave the Giant a lot of ideas and tips ... and they worked!

Inside Wrestling ratings

February 1978

WWWF

World champion: Superstar Graham

1. Bob Backlund
2. Mil Mascaras
3. Dusty Rhodes
4. Ivan Putski
5. Ken Patera
6. Spiros Arion
7. Chief Jay Strongbow
8. Peter Maivia
9. Tony Garea
10. Larry Zbyszko

NWA

World champion: Harley Race

1. Rocky Johnson
2. Terry Funk
3. Ric Flair
4. Dusty Rhodes
5. Dick Slater
6. Paul Jones
7. Lars Anderson
8. Jack Brisco
9. Jimmy Snuka
10. Rick Steamboat

TAG TEAMS

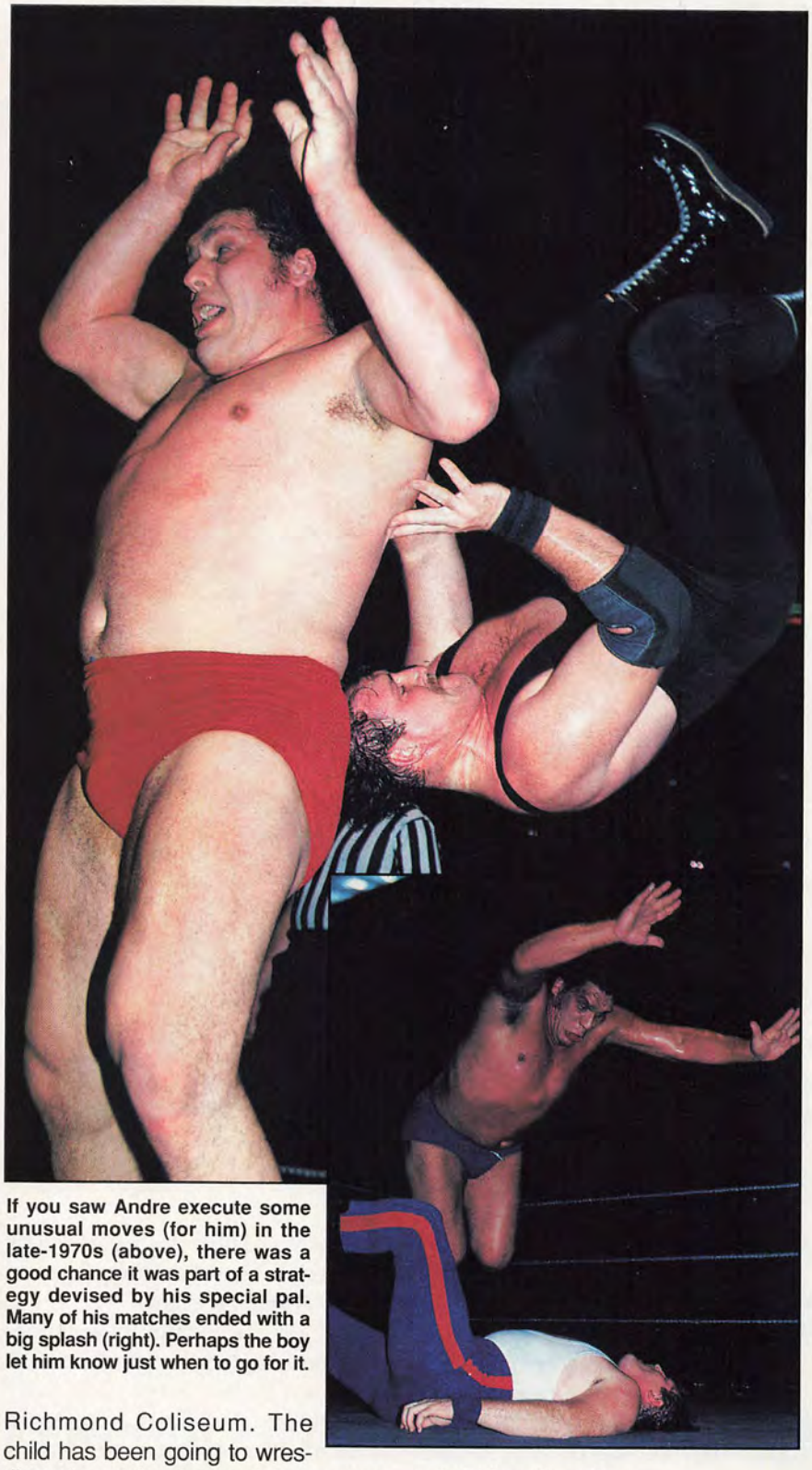
1. Mr. Fuji & Prof. Tanaka
2. Ric Flair & Greg Valentine
3. Greg Gagne & Jim Brunzell
4. The Anderson Brothers
5. Paul Jones & Rick Steamboat
6. The Valiant Brothers
7. Ivan Koloff & Mr. Saito
8. Jack & Jerry Brisco
9. Chief Jay Strongbow & Peter Maivia
10. Jose Lothario & Alberto Madril

MOST POPULAR

1. Andre the Giant
2. Dusty Rhodes
3. Bob Backlund
4. Ivan Putski
5. Mil Mascaras
6. Paul Jones
7. Chief Jay Strongbow
8. Jimmy Snuka
9. Billy Robinson
10. Rick Steamboat

MOST HATED

1. Ken Patera
2. Ric Flair
3. Superstar Graham
4. Greg Valentine
5. Stan Hansen
6. The Sheik
7. Blackjack Mulligan
8. Nick Bockwinkel
9. Spiros Arion
10. Super Destroyer



If you saw Andre execute some unusual moves (for him) in the late-1970s (above), there was a good chance it was part of a strategy devised by his special pal. Many of his matches ended with a big splash (right). Perhaps the boy let him know just when to go for it.

Richmond Coliseum. The child has been going to wrestling shows for the past two years. Early on, he became an Andre the Giant fan. Before a match one night, the boy convinced his father to let him meet Andre. The father agreed and took his son to the dressing room area. What happened next will be remembered by everyone involved for a long time.

After the boy overcame his natural shyness (being so close to his idol), he started talking about the match Andre was about to wrestle. The boy suggested that Andre use certain maneuvers in a certain order. If Andre followed his suggestions, the boy

said, he would win the match.

The wrestler's initial reaction was to dismiss this as the talk of a child. Then he thought about just what the boy was saying. It seemed logical. It made sense. Andre never would have devised such a strategy himself, but it might be worth a try.

In less than five minutes, Andre had soundly defeated his opponent. He had used the small boy's plan. It had worked perfectly.

It should never be thought that Andre cannot devise these strategies on his own. He is not able to rely on the prodigy's advice too often since the boy cannot travel to meet the wrestler's busy schedule. Most of the time, Andre uses his own strategies. But for an especially tough opponent, Andre relies on the boy. For some reason, the youngster can devise plans of attack that would be beyond most seasoned veterans. According to experts who have analyzed these plans, they are brilliant. How does a five-year-old boy do it? No one knows. It is his own special talent, and he uses it exclusively for his idol.

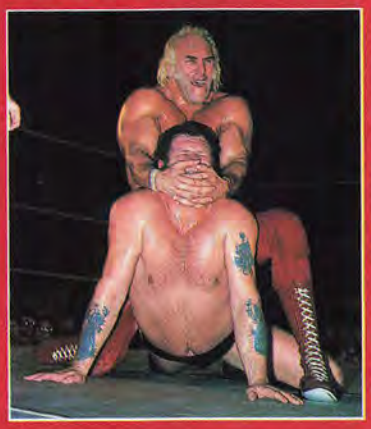
It is no secret that Andre the Giant wants a world title. He has already tried to win the belts in the AWA and the NWA. He has stated on several occasions he is going to keep trying until he succeeds. And anyone who knows Andre knows he is a very determined man. He will get what he wants ... with a little help from a little person.

The child prodigy is ready and waiting with advice for Andre on how to wrestle any of the three world champions. He knows what each man's weaknesses are, and how Andre can exploit these deficiencies. So far, however, the boy's plans are unusable; Andre has not had a shot at a title in a while.

There will come a day when Andre will call upon his brilliant young fan, asking him for advice on what he should do in a title match. There can be no doubt that this advice will be brilliant. Andre will follow this advice (like he has before). He will have the belt he so craves. And he will owe a debt of gratitude to one small boy. □

Inside Wrestling, February 1978

The cover: We all know that after all these decades, Dusty Rhodes is still "The American Dream." So Ric Flair's claim after a match with Dusty 27 years ago that *he* was "The American Dream" didn't stick. Flair claimed that while everyone who saw their match thought they saw him flee from Dusty in fear, he actually left the ring because he felt wrestling someone like Rhodes was beneath him. So he was the new "American Dream." Right, Ric! Flair was stuck with "Nature Boy." And that wasn't too bad.



How 'Bout That For A Challenge: So disgusted with the vile rule-breaking tactics of WWWF champ Superstar Graham was the staff of *Inside Wrestling* that we offered to add $100,000 to the purse for the first match between Graham and Bob Backlund, with the winner getting the loot. See, we feared that if a lot of wrestlers competed in the unscrupulous way Graham did, wrestling might get banned. We never did cut that check, but on February 20, 1978, Backlund made us proud.

Backstabbing "Bear": Pat Patterson should have known better. Back in the late-1970s, Ivan Koloff just couldn't be trusted. "The Russian Bear" had few close allies. But he and Patterson made for a good team, and Patterson wrestled with more of an edge when partnering with him. Patterson, however, snapped when Koloff refused to tag into one of their matches. He then vowed to beat Koloff scientifically in their first showdown. But the match turned so violent that both were ultimately disqualified.

People's Champ ... 20 Years Early: "Soulman" Rocky Johnson was the subject of "Hotseat," and he had some tough talk for then-NWA World champ Harley Race, a man he said ran from him throughout their recent match for the title. He also said the people in the stands were the main reason he was able to keep wrestling at such a high level. He did, however, stop short of calling himself the people's champ, leaving that moniker for his son, The Rock, to make famous two decades later.

Slightly Biased View: Legendary pro-heel columnist Dan Shocket took it upon himself to review the career of Bruno Sammartino as it began to wind down. Not surprisingly, it was a warped view of one of the all-time greats. Shocket presented his case for Sammartino being a terrible—even corrupt—WWWF champion. Shocket hoped his retirement wasn't far off, although he lamented the fact that if it was, referees would have to lower their standard of living since they'd no longer be able to supplement their income with bribes from Bruno.

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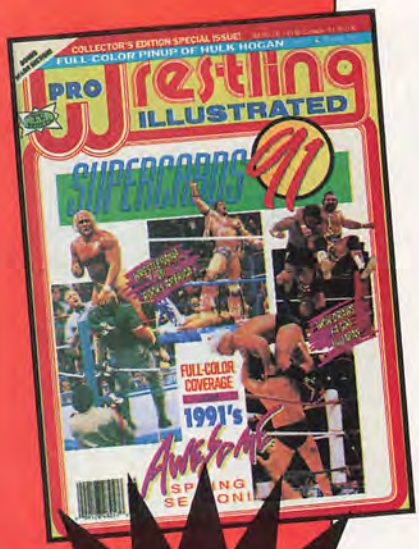

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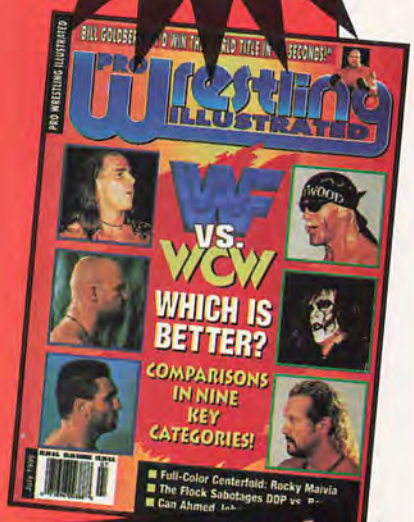

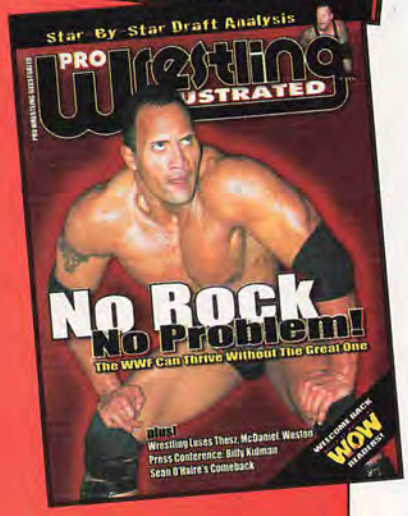

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July 1990: The Maturing Of Lex Luger: The "Total Package" Becomes The People's Choice. Centerfold: Rick Martel. Plus: Skyscrapers, Bobby Heenan, Mr. Saito, referees.

September 1990: The Hulkster's Wrath: 7,000 Miles To Violent Redemption. Centerfold: The Steiners. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Sting, Destruction Crew, Four Horsemen, Curt Hennig.

April 1991: Sgt. Slaughter Guilty Of Treason! Centerfold: Tom Zenk. Plus: Sting, Magnum T.A., Jesse Ventura, Lawler-Gilbert, Hogan & Warrior.

June 1991: Hulk Hogan: America's Hero. Centerfold: Hacksaw Duggan. Plus: Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Nasty Boys, Steiners, Simmons-Reed.

August 1991 (Special Issue): Supercards '91. Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: WrestleMania VII, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior, Owen Hart, Koloff-Luger.

October 1991: Sid Justice: The Second Coming Of Hulk Hogan. Centerfold: Lex Luger. Plus: Hogan-Slaughter, Terrence Taylor, Barry Windham, Williams-Bigelow.

February 1992: Has Hulk Hogan Had Enough? Centerfold: 1992 calendar. Plus: Sting, Justice-Roberts, hot prospects, Eddie Gilbert.

May 1992: Revitalized In Tokyo: Hulk Hogan Is Super-Psyched For WrestleMania VII! Centerfold: Rick Rude. Plus: Sting & Muta-Steiners, Jarrett & Fuller, Lightning Kid, Randy Savage, intimidation.

June 1992: Exclusive *PWI* Interview: Roddy Piper Speaks Out! Centerfold: Dustin Rhodes. Plus: Dangerously-Sting, Abdullah-Cactus, Sid Justice, Randy Savage.

July 1992: The Best Of The Best—The Masters Of Their Craft. Centerfold: Randy Savage. Plus: Liger-Pillman, Jim Neidhart, U.S.-Japan, Ric Flair.

September 1992: Savage vs. Sting: Why It Isn't That Unlikely. Centerfold: Nikita Koloff. Plus: Steiners, Barry Windham, Sid Justice, Hodge & Weston, Shawn Michaels.

February 1993: No One Can Cut Down Razor Ramon. Centerfold: Curt Hennig. Plus: Jake Roberts, Pillman-Dustin, Ric Flair-Road Warriors, Rick Rude, Snuka-Muraco.

May 1996: Un-Natural! The WWF Has Finally Gone Too Far! Centerfold: Public Enemy. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn, Ric Flair, Giant.

October 1996: Peaking Too Soon: Will The Giant Be Ruined By His Own Success? Centerfold: Goldust. Plus: Big Van Vader, Ric Flair, Bulldog, Lex Luger.

May 1998: Starrcade Scandal! We Hate To Say It ... But Give The Belt Back To Hogan. Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Mero & Sable, Taz, Taka Michinoku.

June 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 *PWI* Poll. Centerfold: Steve Austin. Plus: Sabu, Lex Luger, Sting, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg.

July 1998: WWF vs. WCW: Which Is Better? Centerfold: Rocky Maivia. Plus: Benoit, Bill Goldberg, Ahmed Johnson.

October 1998: Bret Screws Bret, Part II. Centerfold: Hunter Hearst Helmsley. Plus: Jim Ross, Marcus Bagwell, WWF controversy, FBI.

Holiday 1998: *PWI* 500. Eighth Annual Special.

March 1999: 1998—The Year In Wrestling. 1998 In Review, Achievement '98 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, predictions for 1999.

April 1999: The Crock! The Title Change That Screwed The World! Centerfold: Chris Jericho. Plus: Bill Goldberg, Tommy Dreamer, Booker T, more Unofficial/Officials.

May 1999: Who Holds The Key To WrestleMania XV? Centerfold: Konnan. Plus: Mark Henry, Sting-Nash, Bill Alfonso, Brian Hildebrand.

June 1999: The *PWI* Poll. Plus: Mankind, Flair & Turner, VMac, Steiners, New Japan-UFO.

July 1999: Warning! This Team Will Self-Destruct In 15 Seconds! Centerfold: X-Pac. Plus: New Jack-Dudleys, Jesse James, Venis & Godfather, Sting-Bischoff-Flair.

August 1999: Supercards '99: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously. Plus: Super 8, Bam Bam Bigelow, Jerry Lawler, tag team wrestling.

September 1999: Why Stone-Cold Might Get Out While He's Still On Top! Centerfold: Sting. Plus: Kidman & Misterio, The Rock, Bret Hart, Taz-Sabu.

October 1999: Why The World Must Fear Scott Steiner, By Buff Bagwell. Centerfold: Mankind. Plus: Kane & X-Pac, The Godfather, Perry Saturn, 20th anniversary readers' poll.

November 1999: The Women Of The WWF: There's More To Their Power Than Their Looks. Centerfold: Owen Hart. Plus: Rey Misterio Jr., Roddy Piper, Steiners, Steve Austin.

December 1999: Steve Austin: "CEO This! I'm The Damn Champ!" Centerfold: Rey Misterio Jr. Plus: Randy Savage, Jimmy Hart, WCW youth, Billy Gunn.

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January 2000: The Millennium Man Mouths Off! An Unforgettable Hour With Chris Jericho! Centerfold: Taz. Plus: Chris Benoit, Sid-Goldberg, Triple-H.

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March 2000: 1999—The Year In Wrestling. 1999 In Review, Achievement'99 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, predictions for 2000.

April 2000: Stone-Cold vs. The Rock: Let's Settle It At WrestleMania! Centerfold: Chris Benoit. Plus: Dallas Page, Goldberg-Vicious, more Unofficial awards.

May 2000: The Y2K *PWI* Poll. Plus: Mitsuharu Misawa, Triple-H, Bret Hart, Hollys, Chyna & Aysa, ECW returnees.

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August 2000: Supercards 2000: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously. Plus: Rob Van Dam, greatest supercards, Super 8.

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October 2000: Scott Steiner: The Superstar The WWF Let Slip Away. Centerfold: Rikishi. Plus: Shawn Michaels, Austin-Rock, Rhino-RVD.

November 2000: The Rock vs. Triple-H. Our Special 50-Category Analysis. Pinups: Extreme wrestling. Plus: Nash-Steiner-Hall, Hardcore Holly, wrestling too extreme?

December 2000: Head Hog! Does Undertaker Have Enough Gas In His Tank To Rumble To The Top? Centerfold: Dallas Page. Plus: Kurt Angle, Rikishi, Vampiro-Sting, Japan.

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January 2001: Who Does He Really Hate? Someone Will Pay For Austin's Pain! Plus: Steven Richards, Justin Credible, Gordon Solie, Jeff Jarrett, Arn-Sid.

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May 2001: The WrestleMania Curse! Will The Great One Ever Win The Big One? Plus: Vince McMahon, William Regal, Page & Nash, Ivory, Lance Storm, ECW.

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January 2002: There's Something About Lita—What Makes Her The WWF's "It" Girl. Plus: Jericho-Stephanie, Mark Henry, X-Pac, Triple-H, Undertaker.

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June 2004: Chris Benoit Wins Raw Title! Radical New Beginning For WWE! Plus: WrestleMania XX, Steve Austin, TNA women, Chavo Guerrero.

Aug. 2004: Will Eddie Guerrero's Championship Ruin His Career? Plus: Hardy-Lita, Mike Kruel, Benjamin-Haas, Booker T, C.W. Anderson.

Oct. 2004: Eugene, The Impossible Dream: When Will His Opponents Wake Up? Plus: Victoria, Edge, Dudleys, A.J. Styles, six-sided ring.

Dec. 2004: *PWI 500*—Chris Benoit's 18-Year Journey To The Pinnacle.

Feb. 2005: A Yes Man? No Way! Ric Flair's Secret Plan Will Ruin Triple-H! Plus: Y2J, The Naturals, Luther Reigns, WrestleMania 21 countdown.

April 2005: Batista: Can He Steal WrestleMania's Future From Orton? Jeff Hardy, Undertaker, Eugene, JBL.

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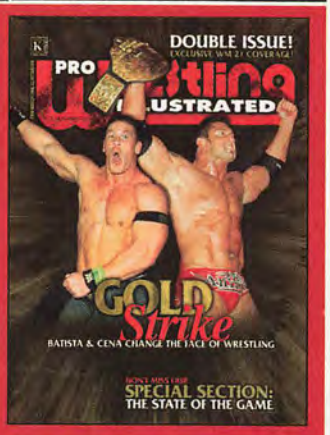
Letters preceded by a ☎ indicate letters left by fans on the *PWI* Hotline (1-900-226-4PWI; see ad elsewhere in this issue).

GOLDEN BOYS



Our July 2005 edition was finished just days after WrestleMania 21, so it was only natural to turn the cover over to the two 'Mania golden boys, John Cena and Batista.

In addition to our WrestleMania 21 coverage, the issue was packed with our annual "State Of The Game" evaluations and write-ups on every superstar who ever competed at WrestleMania.

"It was great to see Cena and Batista finally end the title reigns of JBL and Triple-H," wrote Martin Bee of Adel, Iowa. "I just hope they fare better than Eddie Guerrero and Chris Benoit did a year ago."

Those comparisons were a frequent topic among readers.

"Unlike Benoit and Guerrero, there was a sense of inevitability in Batista and Cena's title wins," wrote Derek Scott of Miami. "I think they are in position for long title reigns."

"The fact that Cena is the Smackdown champ shows how weak that brand is," wrote Ed Carroll of Topeka, Kansas. "It's just a matter of time before he loses to a rightful champion like Kurt Angle or Eddie Guerrero."

MORE TO THE ART

I enjoyed your double "State Of The Game" issue, but I did have some disagreements concerning the "State Of The Art" feature. I am a huge fan of technical wrestling and will happily watch a Flair-Steamboat or Angle-Benoit classic, but I do not believe the art of wrestling is made up solely of technical ability. Guys like The Rock, Steve Austin, Mick Foley, and Undertaker have shown us great matches—and not always old school, catch-as-catch-can-style bouts.

The art of wrestling lies not only in a good match, but also in cutting a good promo, building up a character, working a crowd, and telling a story. Backyard wrestling is often (and rightfully) looked down upon because the performers make no effort to develop a decent character or cut a decent promo. It's like an episode of *Jackass*—there might be crazy stunts, but do we care about the guys doing them? No. The same can be said of many indy promotions that focus on technical wrestling.

I would not like to see these guys present outlandish or unrealistic gimmicks; I'm merely requesting that they go further to get fans to enjoy their product. One of the reasons ECW was so successful was that its wrestlers had innovative and realistic gimmicks that made them recognizable. We all remember Sandman, Foley, and Raven for their characters as well as for all their great matches.

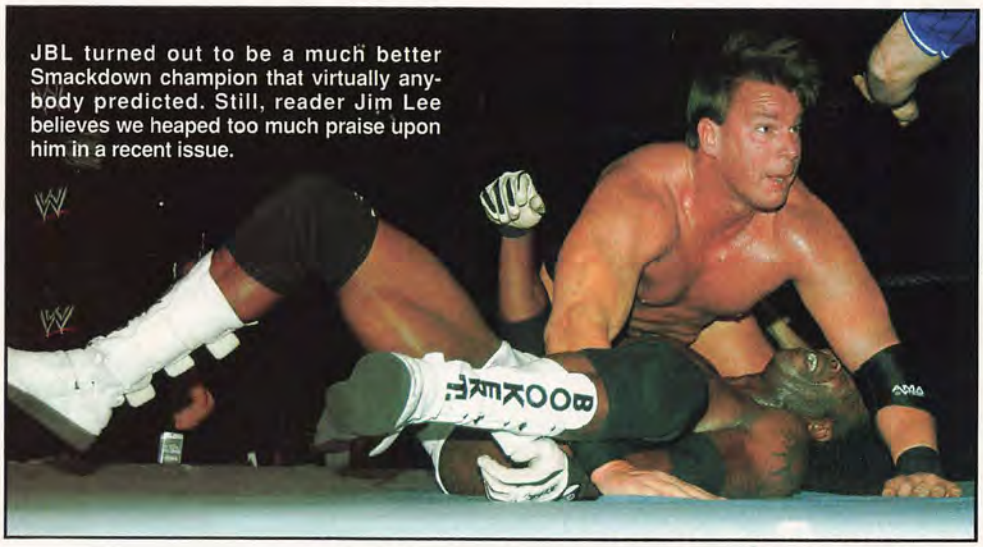
Chris Benoit may be accused of being bland, but he is leagues ahead of his indy counterparts. I cheer for Chris because the effort put into building a fairly simple character makes me feel like I know him. He's the guy with the unmatched intensity and will to win. He is not just another technically talented but faceless wrestler.

I love your magazine, but I ask that you consider this when doing next year's "State Of The Art."

COLM KEARNS
milly48@eircom.net

JBL IN BLUE BELL?

I greatly enjoyed the "State Of The Game" section in *PWI's* July 2005 issue,



JBL turned out to be a much better Smackdown champion that virtually anybody predicted. Still, reader Jim Lee believes we heaped too much praise upon him in a recent issue.

but I can't help but notice the excessive praise lavished upon John Bradshaw Layfield. Are y'all on his payroll, too? Did he give you a stock tip that paid off? JBL is a tough guy, and his character is interesting (if not exceedingly so), but in the ring, he still looks exactly like the slightly above-average power wrestler he was two years ago with The APA. As enamored as the McMahons may be with Layfield, the fans aren't. Thank God for John Cena!

JIM LEE
New Haven, CT

AH, THE MEMORIES

I just had to write to tell you how much I enjoyed your king-sized "WrestleMania Magic Moments" piece in the July 2005 edition. I had forgotten that guys like Bruno Sammartino, Genichiro Tenryu, and Pedro Morales had competed at WrestleMania.

The fact that you took the time to not only identify all 261 wrestlers who had competed on the sport's grandest stage as of 'Mania XX, but to compile all their win-loss records, number of appearances, and each wrestler's one shining moment—and list all the wrestlers alphabetically, no less!—must have been a huge undertaking. I just wanted to let you know I, for one, appreciated your efforts. Reading that piece was like reliving so many of 'Mania's most memorable moments.

So … when should we expect the SummerSlam piece?

STEPHANIE BLAIR
Scranton, PA

Bruno Sammartino himself would likely vehemently protest, but Mike Facciani writes that for credibility reasons, he needs to be inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame. Bob Backlund, too.

CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT

I agree that the WWE Hall of Fame has serious problems. It's a terrible injustice that Bruno Samartino hasn't been inducted. Bruno deserves to be in the WWE Hall of Fame more than anyone. "The Living Legend" wasn't just the greatest World champion WWE ever had; he was the greatest wrestler of all-time. Over the course of his two title reigns, Bruno held the World championship for about 11 years, much longer than anyone else. Bruno's first record title reign of 7½ years, from 1963 to 1971, is a monumental achievement that will never be broken. It will probably never even be approached. Nowadays, a world champion is lucky if he can keep the belt for 7½ *months*.

Bob Backlund deserves to be inducted, too. Frankly, I was never much of a Backlund fan. Looking back over the years, however, I've gained more respect and appreciation for him. Although Backlund lacked personality and charisma, and he wasn't very marketable, there's no denying that he was an excellent scientific wrestler who managed to hold the World championship for nearly six years against fierce competition.

The WWE Hall of Fame loses credibility by not inducting great former champs like Bruno Sammartino and Bob Backlund. By not honoring wrestlers like them, WWE turns its back on important parts of its own illustrious history.

MIKE FACCIANI
Johnstown, PA

ONE HAPPY PEEP

I'm glad to see that Christian is finally getting what he has so long deserved in WWE—a chance to become a main-eventer and a serious world title contender. He has pure ability, amazing charisma (after all, he is "*Captain* Charisma"), exceptional microphone skills, and the most awesome entrance music of anyone in WWE. Not only that, but he has been arguably the most consistent performer of the last few years in WWE. Here's hoping that Christian eventually gets a chance to become a world champion.

JEFF JUDD
heluvajobu@yahoo.com□

PWI Hotline Extra!

Your answers to our question of the week!

Question of the Week: What is your initial reaction to reports that TNA hopes to air programming opposite *Raw* if a deal with WGN is signed? (May 29 to June 5, 2005)

Hotline callers respond: "I would love nothing better than seeing TNA on Monday nights," said Trevor Ellis of Utica, New York. "We could have a new Monday night war between two major promotions, and that could renew interest in wrestling."

"All this talk of going head-to-head with WWE is premature, considering TNA has yet to sign a new TV deal and—as of this moment—doesn't have TV at all," said Scott Ritchie of Fort Wayne, Indiana.

"It would all depend on what kind of product TNA put opposite WWE," said Janet Illuzi of Knoxville, Tennessee. "*Raw* has the best production values and talent in the world. If TNA puts out something that's just a pale imitation, the strategy is going to backfire. TNA really has to make *Impact* a fresh alternative."

PWI official ratings

For period ended June 24, 2005

TOP 10

1. **BATISTA**
   318, Washington, DC
   (1) WWE Raw champion
2. **JOHN CENA**
   260, West Newbury, MA
   (2) WWE Smackdown champion
3. **SATOSHI KOJIMA**
   223, Tokyo, Japan
   (3) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
4. **TRIPLE-H**
   269, Greenwich, CT
   (10) No. 1 contender: WWE Raw title
5. **HIROYOSHI TENZAN**
   270, Tokyo, Japan
   (-) IWGP heavyweight champion
6. **JOHN B. LAYFIELD**
   306, Roscoe, TX
   (4) No. 1 contender: WWE Smackdown title
7. **RAVEN**
   243, Short Hills, NJ
   (-) NWA heavyweight champion
8. **CHRIS BENOIT**
   224, Edmonton, Alberta
   (-) No. 2 contender: WWE Smackdown title
9. **EDGE**
   240, Toronto, Ontario
   (5) No. 2 contender: WWE Raw title
10. **C.M. PUNK**
    220, Chicago, IL
    (-) Ring of Honor champion

Raven

TAG TEAMS

1. **JOEY MERCURY & JOHNNY NITRO**
   Combined weight: 417 pounds
   (1) WWE Smackdown tag team champions
2. **ANDY DOUGLAS & CHASE STEVENS**
   Combined weight: 444 pounds
   (5) NWA tag team champions
3. **SHINSUKE NAKAMURA & HIROSHI TANAHASHI**
   Combined weight: 477 pounds
   (2) IWGP International tag team champions
4. **THE HURRICANE & ROSEY**
   Combined weight: 570 pounds
   (3) WWE Raw tag team champions
5. **CHARLIE HAAS & HARDCORE HOLLY**
   Combined weight: 514 pounds
   (-) No. 1 contenders: WWE Smackdown tag title
6. **JAMAL & TAIYO KEA**
   Combined weight: 591 pounds
   (4) All-Japan International tag team champions
7. **CHRIS HARRIS & JAMES STORM**
   Combined weight: 516 pounds
   (6) No. 1 contenders: NWA tag title
8. **SIMON DEAN & MAVEN**
   Combined weight: 424 pounds
   (-) No. 1 contenders: WWE Raw tag title
9. **THE BASHAM BROTHERS**
   Combined weight: 492 pounds
   (8) No. 2 contenders: WWE Smackdown tag title
10. **CHAD & TANK TOLAND**
    Combined weight: 448 pounds
    (-) OVW Southern tag team champions

WWE RAW

Raw Champion:
BATISTA
(C) 318, Washington, DC

1—**TRIPLE-H** *(3) 269, Greenwich, CT*
2—**EDGE** *(1) 240, Toronto, Ontario*
3—**CARLITO CARIBBEAN COOL** *(-) 220, San Juan, Puerto Rico*
4—**CHRIS JERICHO** *(9) 225, Winnipeg, Manitoba*
5—**SHELTON BENJAMIN** *(2) 245, Spartanburg, SC*
6—**CHRISTIAN** *(8) 225, Toronto, Ontario*
7—**KANE** *(5) 326, St. Louis, MO*
8—**SHAWN MICHAELS** *(4) 217, San Antonio, TX*
9—**KURT ANGLE** *(-) 233, Pittsburgh, PA*
10—**CHRIS MASTERS** *(-) 270, Santa Monica, CA*

WWE SMACKDOWN

Smackdown Champion:
JOHN CENA
(C) 260, West Newbury, MA

1—**JOHN B. LAYFIELD** *(1) 306, Roscoe, TX*
2—**CHRIS BENOIT** *(-) 224, Edmonton, Alberta*
3—**BOOKER T** *(2) 250, Houston, TX*
4—**EDDIE GUERRERO** *(6) 223, El Paso, TX*
5—**THE BIG SHOW** *(4) 485, Aiken, SC*
6—**REY MISTERIO JR.** *(5) 163, San Diego, CA*
7—**ORLANDO JORDAN** *(8) 250, Miami, FL*
8—**THE UNDERTAKER** *(-) 304, Dallas, TX*
9—**PAUL LONDON** *(7) 201, Austin, TX*
10—**MUHAMMAD HASSAN** *(-) 231, Syracuse, NY*

OVW

OVW Champion:
BRENT ALBRIGHT
(C) 230, Tulsa, OK

1—**DEUCE SHADE** *(-) 230, Fiji Islands*
2—**LANCE CADE** *(-) 253, Omaha, NE*
3—**BLASTER LASHLEY** *(-) 255, Topeka, KS*
4—**KEN DOANE** *(-) 210, Louisville, KY*
5—**DANNY INFERNO** *(5) 237, Atlantic City, NJ*
6—**SETH SKYFIRE** *(7) 224, Louisville, KY*
7—**MATT CAPPOTELLI** *(4) 220, Norwich, NY*
8—**AARON STEVENS** *(3) 237, Boston, MA*
9—**JOHNNY JETER** *(-) 218, San Diego, CA*
10—**MIKE MONDO** *(6) 185, Long Island City, NY*

RING OF HONOR

ROH Champion:
C.M. PUNK
(2) 220, Chicago, IL

1—**SAMOA JOE** *(1) 270, American Samoa*
2—**AUSTIN ARIES** *(C) 202, Milwaukee, WI*
3—**HOMICIDE** *(3) 220, Brooklyn, NY*
4—**JAMES GIBSON** *(4) 190, Hanover, WV*
5—**A.J. STYLES** *(-) 202, Gainesville, GA*
6—**JAY LETHAL** *(9) 192, Elizabeth, NJ*
7—**SPANKY** *(-) 212, Olympia, WA*
8—**RODERICK STRONG** *(-) 205, Tampa, FL*
9—**CHRISTOPHER DANIELS** *(-) 210, Los Angeles, CA*
10—**NIGEL McGUINNESS** *(6) 220, London, England*

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

AMERICAN PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Shane Austin; **1**—Rowdy James; **2**—Ostgard; **3**—Zack Salvation; **4**—Kirk Prodigy; **5**—Sir Jonathan Buffett; **6**—Ken Magnum; **7**—Neil Nitro; **8**—Mickey Richards; **9**—Dirty; **10**—David Duke.

BAD 2 THE BONE WRESTLING: Champion—Tracey Smothers; **1**—Vic the Bruiser; **2**—J.C. Bailey; **3**—Simon Sezz; **4**—Randy Royal; **5**—Brandon Blaze; **6**—Billy Black; **7**—Todd Morton; **8**—Shane Mathews; **9**—K-Lo; **10**—Blade.

CHAMPIONSHIP PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Switchblade; **1**—Masked Superstar; **2**—Shane Shadows; **3**—King Kong Bundy; **4**—The Patriot; **5**—Bob Keller; **6**—Hyjinx; **7**—Zubov; **8**—Leslie Leatherman; **9**—Jake Davis; **10**—Brian Johnson.

CHAOTIC WRESTLING: Champion—Mike Kruel; **1**—Brian Milonas; **2**—Arch Kincaid; **3**—Chase Del Monte; **4**—Handsome Johnny; **5**—Luis Ortiz; **6**—Maverick Wild; **7**—Fred Sampson; **8**—Tommy Penmanship; **9**—The Mighty Mini; **10**—Andre Lyonz.

EXODUS WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—George South Sr.; **1**—Mike Lee; **2**—Bobby Eaton; **3**—Rick Morton; **4**—Ethan Cage; **5**—Canadian Bulldog; **6**—Jessie Morris; **7**—Jason Jones; **8**—Brad Anderson; **9**—Greg Armstrong; **10**—Cruel Connection II.

FAR NORTH WRESTLING: Champion—Seth James; **1**—Austin Aries; **2**—Hacksaw Duggan; **3**—T. Rantula; **4**—Sterling James Keenan; **5**—Mike Quackenbush; **6**—B-Boy; **7**—The Blue Meanie; **8**—C.J. O'Doyle; **9**—Lord Zoltan; **10**—Doink the Clown.

HCW CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Billy Maverick; **1**—Xavier Daniels; **2**—Brian Logan; **3**—Shane Mathews; **4**—Alex Walker; **5**—Shawn Christopher; **6**—Mike Harris; **7**—Black Rain; **8**—Justin Idol; **9**—Hamid Jihad; **10**—Ray Steele.

MIDWEST POWERHOUSE WRESTLING: Champion—The Searcher; **1**—Damian Blade; **2**—Bob Orton Jr.; **3**—Christian Haze; **4**—Chico Es Loco; **5**—Scar; **6**—Dan Walsh; **7**—Curtis Payne; **8**—Napalm; **9**—Rick Ruby; **10**—Xavier Frost.

NATIONAL WRESTLING LEAGUE: Champion—Jason Static; **1**—John Rambo; **2**—King Kong Bundy; **3**—Samu; **4**—Kevin Featherstone; **5**—Axl Rotten; **6**—Qeenan Creed; **7**—Scott Vaughn; **8**—Doink the Clown; **9**—Shorty Smalls; **10**—Blackhawk.

NWA UNIVERSAL: Champion—John O'Malley; **1**—Scotty Charisma; **2**—Michael Barry; **3**—Gary Gram; **4**—Tim Warcloud; **5**—Kevin Northcutt; **6**—Harley D; **7**—John Saxon; **8**—Shadow; **9**—Renegade; **10**—Chris Matthews.

RAZORBACK ALL-STAR WRESTLING: Champion—Title Vacant; **1**—Jamie Jay; **2**—Alan Steele; **3**—Hoss Williams; **4**—Don Bass; **5**—Madd Chef; **6**—Jamaican Kid; **7**—Matt Riviera; **8**—Dustin Nazareth; **9**—Scufflin' Hillbilly; **10**—Gary Lang.

WORLD XTREME WRESTLING: Champion—Rockin' Rebel; **1**—Samu; **2**—Homicide; **3**—Bison Bravado; **4**—Boogalou; **5**—C.J. O'Doyle; **6**—Steve Fury; **7**—Cabbie; **8**—Havoc; **9**—Greg Matthews; **10**—Sinister X.

NWA

NWA Champion:
RAVEN
(7) 243, Short Hills, NJ

1—A.J. STYLES
(1) 202, Gainesville, GA
2—JEFF JARRETT
(C) 230, Nashville, TN
3—ABYSS
(3) 295, Cincinnati, OH
4—MONTY BROWN
(–) 268, Detroit, MI
5—SEAN WALTMAN
(–) 219, Minneapolis, MN
6—J.T. WOLFEN
(6) 297, New Haven, CT
7—SPYDER
(5) 225, New York, NY
8—CHRISTOPHER DANIELS
(2) 210, Los Angeles, CA
9—VID VAIN
(9) 257, Bishops Falls, NF
10—DRU ONYX
(–) 320, Montreal, Quebec

TNA

NWA Champion:
RAVEN
(6) 243, Short Hills, NJ

1—CHRISTOPHER DANIELS
(1) 210, Los Angeles, CA
2—ABYSS
(5) 295, Cincinnati, OH
3—A.J. STYLES
(2) 202, Gainesville, GA
4—MONTY BROWN
(–) 268, Detroit, MI
5—SEAN WALTMAN
(–) 219, Minneapolis, MN
6—CHRIS SABIN
(9) 207, Hell, MI
7—JEFF JARRETT
(C) 230, Nashville, TN
8—SHOCKER
(4) 185, Guadalajara, Mexico
9—SAMOA JOE
(–) 270, American Samoa
10—RON KILLINGS
(–) 230, Charlotte, NC

JAPAN

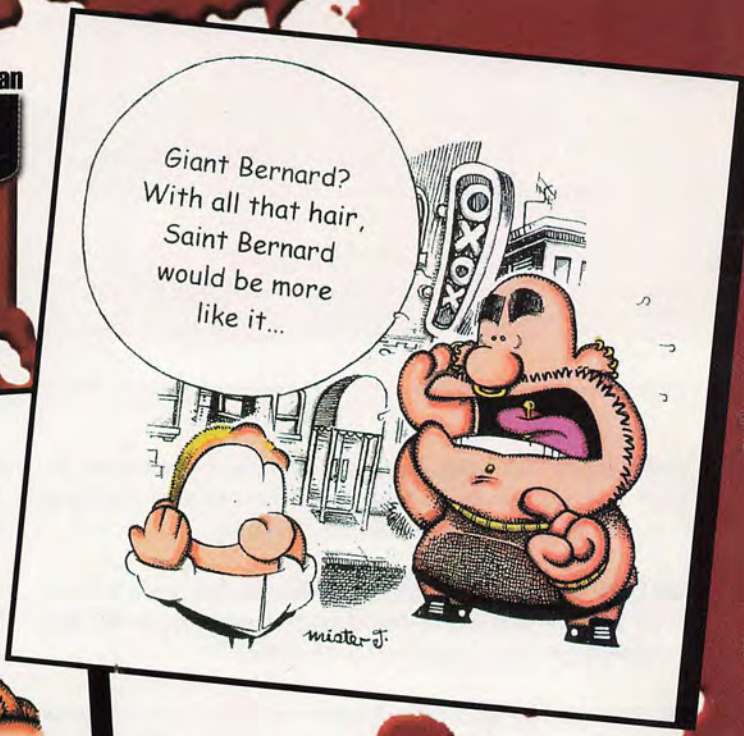
1—SATOSHI KOJIMA
(1) 223, Tokyo, Japan
All-Japan Triple Crown champion
2—HIROYOSHI TENZAN
(4) 270, Tokyo, Japan
IWGP heavyweight champion
3—TAKESHI RIKIOH
(2) 286, Sakurai, Japan
GHC heavyweight champion
4—TIGER MASK IV
(5) 170, Uruyasu, Japan
5—KENTA KOBASHI
(8) 282, Fukuchiyama, Japan
6—JUSHIN LIGER
(10) 222, Hiroshima, Japan
7—YOSHINOBU KANEMARU
(–) 200, Yofu, Japan
8—TOSHIAKI KAWADA
(3) 245, Ashikaga, Japan
9—KEIJI MUTO
(9) 245, Yamanashi, Japan
10—GENICHIRO TENRYU
(–) 235, Tokyo, Japan

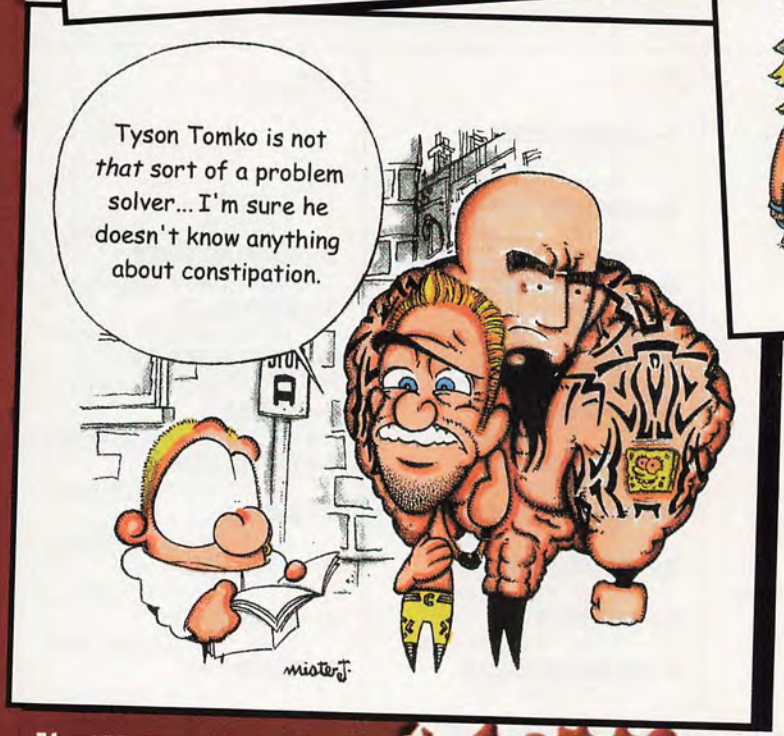
MEXICO

1—L.A. PARK
(2) 235, Torreon, Mexico
2—EL HIJO DEL SANTO
(1) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico
3—HEAVY METAL
(7) 180, Mexico City, Mexico
4—PERRO AGUAYO JR.
(3) 165, Zacatecas, Mexico
5—KONNAN
(4) 235, Mexico City, Mexico
6—HECTOR GARZA
(8) 220, Monterrey, Mexico
7—MISTICO
(–) 194, Mexico City, Mexico
8—LATIN LOVER
(5) 190, Monterrey, Mexico
9—NEGRO CASAS
(10) 175, Mexico City, Mexico
10—TARZAN BOY
(–) 218, Mexico City, Mexico

Drawing Blood

By Jason Conlan





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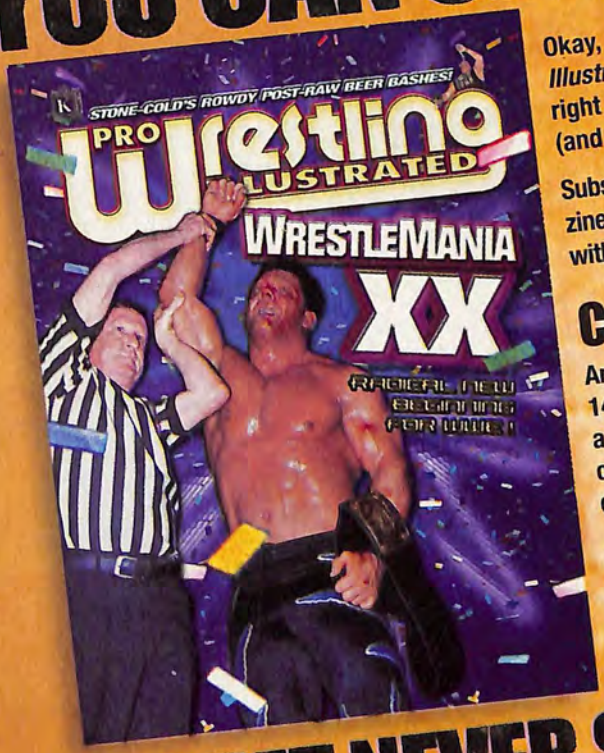

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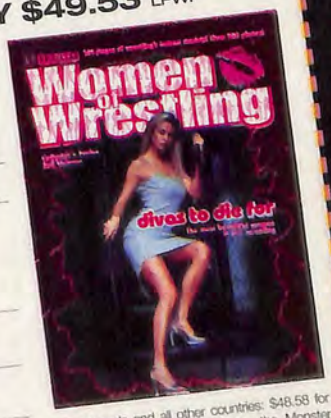

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